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# THE ART TEACHING OF JOHN RUSKIN

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BY

W. G. COLLINGWOOD, M.A.

LATE SCHOLAR OF UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, OXFORD

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# PREFACE

IT is perhaps too much to expect of the "general reader" that he should defer criticism of Mr. Ruskin's various utterances until he has studied the whole of Mr. Ruskin's writings. And yet, without a firm grasp of the general character and tendency of this author's thought, there is a great risk either of resting satisfied with his wit and picturesqueness, or of doing him the grave injustice which is done to any thinker when we quote texts without context, and use his words without their true weight in them.

To all standard systems of philosophy, handbooks or summaries have been written, usually by some pupil personally acquainted with the master, and in sympathy with his character and tone of thought. Such summaries, so far from superseding the original works, have been found most useful in promoting their study,—in clearing up their difficulties, and in emphasising those leading thoughts which are often understood rather than expressed in the discursive eloquence of a great writer. It may be questioned by some

whether Mr. Ruskin is entitled to rank with the standard philosophers. We had better leave that question to posterity. It is enough that half a century of criticism, in an age which is nothing if not critical, has only confirmed the position which he took as a youth in the world of art and literature. An undoubted genius, quite unique in his powers and in his views, must command the attention of all, while he enlists the full sympathy of comparatively few. But his name is so identified with art in England, that no intelligent student can afford to ignore him.

In the following chapters I offer my contribution to the better understanding of his work by doing for the complex and multitudinous writings of Mr. Ruskin what other disciples have done for other masters: systematising where he scorns system, condensing into curt abstract what he has detailed in charming redundance of diction and illustration, collecting and comparing his scattered utterances on the various branches of his wide-spread subject; in the belief, which I trust the reader will ratify, that Mr. Ruskin's writings on art, though "a mighty maze," are "not without a plan."

W. G. C.

CONISTON, 23*rd Sept.* 1891.

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# ABBREVIATED REFERENCES

M. P. = *Modern Painters*: the edition used throughout has been that of 1888; and the references are made as briefly and clearly as possible in each case to direct the reader's attention to the passage required, whatever edition he possesses. Where the page is mentioned, the pagination of the "1888" edition nearly corresponds with that of earlier complete editions.

S. V. = *Stones of Venice*: large edition of 1886 used. To this the same remarks apply as to M. P. (the "Travellers' ed." contains only selections).

S. L. A. = *Seven Lamps of Architecture*: large edition of 1880.

E. D. = *Elements of Drawing* (out of print): edition of 1857, referred to by page.

A. E. = *The Art of England*: edition of 1887, referred to by lecture and page.

L. F. = *Laws of Fésole*: complete edition of 1882, referred to by chapter and paragraph.

The following are referred to by numbered paragraphs, which are continuous throughout each volume.

L. A. P. = *Lectures on Architecture and Painting*: edition of 1891.

J. E. = *A Joy for Ever* (Political Economy of Art): small edition of 1887.

T. P. = *The Two Paths*: small edition of 1887.

L. A. = *Inaugural Lectures on Art at Oxford*: small edition of 1887.

A. P. = *Aratra Pentelici*: large edition of 1879.

A. F. = *Ariadne Florentina* : large edition of 1876.

V. d'A. = *Val d'Arno* : large edition of 1882.

E. N. = *Eagle's Nest* : small edition of 1887.

Of other works the title is given in full.

References to passages in the present work are by chapter or paragraph (continuously numbered throughout) without any title prefixed.

# CHAPTER I

## BIOGRAPHICAL

1. *The Scope of his Teaching.*—To put the reader of Mr. Ruskin's works at Mr. Ruskin's point of view; to give some distinct clue to the thread of thought which runs throughout his writings; to disentangle it from all the complicated embroidery of eloquence, description, and digression which at the same time ornament and obscure it; to bring together the statements of his different periods, and to compare the results of his various investigations pursued along different lines: in short, to help the student of Ruskin, is the purpose of these chapters. They are designed as a companion to the study of Mr. Ruskin's teaching; not, primarily, as a compendium of his doctrines.

And yet, as they must of necessity embody a great part of his thoughts upon many subjects connected with Art, they might be taken by some readers as an attempt to condense and expound the whole. To so extensive a task I do not address myself; chiefly because Mr. Ruskin is

unsystematic, and rather paraded a contempt for system, which I suspect to have been a reaction from earlier ambitions. In the *Oxford Lectures* he recurs to orderly arrangement, more or less; but meantime his style had been fixed; and he had become an essayist, instead of a writer of treatises.

And he had also become a practical teacher instead of a closet-philosopher. He had tried to give lessons to inquiring artists, to intelligent lads of what are called the "working classes," teaching for many years at the Working Men's College in Gt. Ormond St., Bloomsbury; and the formality of youth had worn off—the stiffness of his graduate's gown had got rumpled out, and he went to work in his shirt-sleeves, so to speak, as every earnest man must, eventually. But when a Luther or a Wiclif preaches in the vulgar tongue, it is not from lack of Latin; and when a man like Ruskin writes *Academy Notes*, and *Elements of Drawing*, and letters to the newspapers, and lectures at night-schools—full of one-sided, enthusiastic preaching of the truth immediately necessary—it is not to be supposed that he is a fanatic, and has suddenly lost all his philosophy. The great teachers are those who abdicate the chair for the pulpit, who abandon the treatise for the pamphlet; I say *abdicate* and *abandon*, for there is no virtue in untaught pulpiteering and pamphleteering; it is only when these popular methods are used by great men that they become rightly influential.

And in this mood Ruskin has often said hard things against professional philosophers, chiefly because of the "unsettling" tendency of the

post-Hegelian age; but not without reason, in the domain of Art-Philosophy especially, because to a serious student of Art in all its forms these framers of *a priori* art-theories seem often to be trying to make bricks—not without straw perhaps—but without clay. Very few of the professed thinkers have had a real, working acquaintance with Art; they usually re-echo the gossip of a few studios, and re-assert the fallacies of the common handbooks; and the practised ear detects the plagiarised phrase, and resents the imposture. Especially in the instances they give, in the obviously limited range of their illustrations, in the choice of commonplace or second-rate examples, and in their blindness to unacknowledged excellence, one sees that they are not versed in Art; and consequently the formulæ with which they assume to have summed up the complexities of the subject do not always bear examination in the light of a full and detailed acquaintance with the very varied processes of mind and practices of hand which Art has actually employed.

Therefore, if we are accustomed to look on Mr. Ruskin as anti-philosophical, it is because he has passed through the phase of attempting systematic theory, and come out into the freer air of purified common sense, with the mission to teach and preach one truth at a time, as his audience and occasion required. But it is not in maintaining any obvious system of consistent formulæ that one is a philosopher; it is only by having thought out one's subject. And, taking Mr. Ruskin's writings as a whole, allowing for the gradual development of his mind, for successive stages of study, and

the continually changing circumstances and influences under which he lived, we can trace a distinct cohesion and continuity in his thought, all the more valuable because his interests were so varied and the appeals to his attention so diverse.

3. *His Artistic Education.*—Mr. Ruskin was not brought up as an artist; he was intended for the Church, and expected to be a poet. If he had been sent at sixteen to the Academy Schools we should have had another painter of some originality, of great talent in draughtsmanship, and of extreme refinement; but we should not have had the writer who, far beyond any other, has directed the practice and stimulated the patronage of Art in England. At a very early age he began to draw illustrations to his MS. books, at first quite without a teacher, and then in complete independence of the teachers under whom he was put. His real masters were Turner and Prout and Roberts, whose engraved works he copied with care; not Copley Fielding and Harding, who taught him something, no doubt, but not what they intended to teach him. In the spring of 1836, when he was seventeen years old (born on 8th February 1819), he took lessons from Fielding, with very little profit; but he loved Fielding's work for the sake of its subject. In 1841, in the autumn, he took lessons from J. D. Harding, and learnt from him, not the "tree-touch," but the contempt which Harding shows in his written teaching for vulgar Dutch realism, and the reason for that attitude, based upon high ideals of the mission of Art and the responsibilities of the

missionaries. Harding was a sincerely religious man, who felt that landscape was a sort of religious art, as showing forth the praise of the Creator: he was not satisfied with teaching his pupils to draw; he tried to teach them to think, and to adore the Maker of the beautiful scenes whose memory they were to preserve by "the use of the lead pencil." And he certainly became such a teacher as we had not before; we owe a great debt to him for making Drawing acceptable to the temper, and instructive to the mind, of religious England.

But it did not need a Harding to put this before Ruskin, who by that time, already twenty-two years of age, had shown that he knew and felt as much,—in his early Poems, in his early Essays, in his early attempts at drawing, both published and unpublished. The very next year he was writing *Modern Painters*, and discussing Art from a much higher standpoint than any that Harding reached. The claim of Harding's friends that Ruskin did not sufficiently acknowledge his obligations to the pioneer of his advance, is founded on a want of appreciation of the real and fundamental distinction between the two men. Ruskin says things that Harding says, but he would have said them in any case; and he goes beyond Harding at every turn—he investigates regions which Harding never entered. In *Modern Painters* Harding is treated with respect; in the 1883 Epilogue to vol. ii. with eulogy; and the engraver's error in plate 27 (vol. iv.)—by which, in early editions, the Hardingesque tree seems, on comparing the text, to be meant for the worst type of all

—is so obviously an error that it need never have been taken for an insult.

4. *His Independent Study.*—But though he was not the pupil of drawing-masters, he was the energetic student of Art, from those early days when, aged eleven, he facsimiled Cruikshank, and when, at the age of fourteen, he imitated Turner's vignettes, and copied Rembrandt at the Louvre. Throughout his life he studied masterpieces of ancient Art in the only way in which they can be thoroughly studied—by facsimile copying; and as specimens of his work in this kind may be seen in his Oxford School, the St. Catherine of Luini, and in his own house, the Zipporah of Botticelli and the St. Ursula of Carpaccio.

Besides copying the masters he made analytical notes in galleries. These are generally found in his journal, which he has always kept with assiduity; a specimen of his unpublished remarks on treatment, colour, and composition in some of the pictures at Genoa is given in *Stones of Venice*, in the supplementary chapter entitled "Castel Franco" (vol. iii. of new edition). This fact is worth noting, because it is sometimes supposed that Mr. Ruskin is one of those writers who are discursive from lack of matter, and that his examination of his subject has always been superficial. On the contrary, those who have been able to look over his note-books can testify to his diligence in collecting all manner of material bearing on his subject; and those who have been with him during the progress of any important work know with what elaborate care he has built up his argument; though when

all is done, he knocks away the scaffolding, so to speak, and leaves his fabric unsupported by the props and ties and *débris* of "authorities," which many writers accumulate around their work in the shape of notes and references.

But together with his studies of Art he studied Nature from the beginning; sketched unweariedly, in season and out of season; noted phenomena; elaborated detail; caught effects; measured proportions and angles; in short, he has worked at the craft of the landscape painter in all except painting pictures; and the more thoroughly, because his memoranda were not merely meant to serve for painting pictures, but for study of the subject. Every landscape artist of serious aim knows how much of this sort of labour is necessary, though it never meet the eye of the public; and that in doing it lies the difference between the professionally educated landscapist and the mere amateur. Mr. Ruskin has practically had the education of a professional painter—and a good deal more than most of them—by unremitting application to study.

In this way he created a style of his own—a style which is so characteristic of the man that it is hardly adaptable to the aims of ordinary artists; and yet it contains the elements for which we should look in a student of Nature, whose desire is not to produce pretty pictures or striking compositions, but to record phenomena with delicacy and accurate completeness. A drawing by him is not a remarkable object in an exhibition; but it is good to live with, because it does not depend

on the artifices of contrasted arrangement, the dexterity of bold execution, and all the other qualities which ensure immediate popularity at some expense of intimate and lasting appeal. It is not a "picture" but a "study."

Most of his work was done, from the commencement, with the intention of illustrating his books; and consequently is on a small scale, refusing colour, and emphasising the characteristics to which he meant to call attention. He never mastered oil-painting; partly because the facts he wanted to record could be much more easily got in line and water-colour wash, partly because he never meant to paint pictures, and oil-colour is especially the material for picture painting. But etching in its various methods was practised by him with skill and success, of which examples are among the illustrations to *Modern Painters* and the soft-ground plates to the early editions of *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*—one of which was "savagely" bitten in his wash-hand basin at La Cloche in Dijon, and is none the worse for its summary treatment.

For sensitive delineation, pure draughtsmanship of natural detail and architectural ornament, involving subtlety of refined curvature and delicate adjustment of lines, I do not think his work can be beaten. It is idle to suppose that his published plates owe their qualities to the engravers; the qualities are equally present in work engraved by his own hand; and the original drawings are finer than the reproductions—without prejudice to the reputation of the famous men who worked for him,

and in so doing touched perhaps the highest level that their Art has reached.

Teaching, studying, drawing, engraving, sketching,—it might well seem that life was not long enough for all this, together with literary labours and social reform; were it not that Mr. Ruskin is the most energetic of men, inheriting an unwearied activity from his parents, and brought up by them to be never idle, but always obviously occupied. His objection to smoking, for instance, is grounded on the idea that it tends to make time pass pleasantly without active employment: his objection to athletics and games is that they divert energy from useful purpose. In his own case—however one may estimate the result—we have a man who has never idled, never spent his time in society, never wasted his energies in anything but his work. "If you want to get on better than other people," one of our gnomic writers has said, "you must do more work than they." And if you want to teach Art, you must practise it, and study it, and everything appertaining to it, far more conscientiously than the average artist or critic. The conception of Ruskin as a mere literary stylist and dilettante in Art is an error; there are few writers whose opinions are founded on so thorough an examination of the subject.

5. *His Relation to Academicism.*—Beside the practice of Art, which does not in itself justify philosophic criticism and generalisations of theory, Ruskin began at an early age to study such writers as were then accessible; of which there were two kinds,—those who, being artists, wrote

about Art from the point of view mainly of practice; and those who, being critics, wrote their notions of the theory. In the first class, besides current literature such as that contained in E. V. Rippingille's *Artists' and Amateurs' Magazine*, there were the lecturers at the Royal Academy—Reynolds, Barry, Fuseli. Sir Joshua Reynolds was much the most important, both as a great artist and as a fine writer. Ruskin was brought up in an atmosphere of tradition of the Johnsonian School; the *Rambler* and the *Idler*, to which Reynolds contributed, were his father's favourite reading among those scenes of travel which gave the son his opportunities and inspirations for the study of Art and Nature. James Northcote, the favourite pupil and biographer of Reynolds, was a friend of the family; and it was natural that the great Sir Joshua should be respected with youthful hero-worship by a boy who found noble qualities in his work and sound sense in his "Discourses."

Accordingly, the first two volumes of *Modern Painters* start from Reynolds as from an authority in whom there may be blemishes, but no serious flaw. And when, in 1855, it was necessary to controvert the peculiar doctrines of Academicism of which Reynolds was the exponent, Ruskin's tone towards his old master is that of courteous antagonism. The lesser critics among his foes he hunted like rats and crushed without remorse, which makes his treatment of the nobler opponent all the more distinguished. And as time went on, and the ghost of the Grand Style was laid,

together with many other potent wraiths and tyrannic giants of the bygone age, to trouble the world no more (for a season)—his old comradeship with his predecessor in Art-Teaching was revived. He praised his work and his doctrines in a course of Oxford Lectures; and very many of the points upon which his latest teaching insists are the points upon which Sir Joshua insisted.

As I have studied the influence of Reynolds on Ruskin, their points of contact and coincidence, elsewhere (in the magazine *Igdrasil*, vol. i. No. 4, published by George Allen), it is unnecessary here to repeat the full detail, especially as it would lead us farther than we can afford to go. But in a word it may be said that of all previous writers on Art, Reynolds has influenced Mr. Ruskin more than any other, in spite of grave diversities of temper and wide differences of conclusion. For Academicism as such, apart from the personality of a genius like Sir Joshua, Ruskin has never had much respect. For the Royal Academy as an institution he has had his hopes and indicated his ideals. With many of its members he has had friendly relations; he has done justice to their talents; and though he has not spared criticism he never joined in the indiscriminating detraction of jealous outsiders.

6. *His Relation to English Art-Philosophy.*—Besides these artists who wrote upon Art, there were several professed philosophers whom Ruskin studied with a view to the bearing of their doctrines upon his special subject. He left Oxford, as many reading men do, with a

somewhat high estimate of the advantage of a couple of years' study of Logic and Ethics. Without that study and the training it implies, serious investigation of a general subject is almost impossible; but the undergraduates' curriculum does not carry one very far. Ruskin's philosophical work was complimented by the examiners who gave him his degree; but that did not approve him a philosopher, any more than his winning the Newdigate prize proved him a poet. It shows, however, that he could, and did, assimilate what Oxford, in the days when she produced some of our leading thinkers, had to teach; and that there was some justification in the doctrinaire tone of his earliest books. In 1843, when *Modern Painters* was published, he was only twenty-four; but he had been before the public as a writer of prose and verse for nearly ten years, not without distinct applause and the well-understood anticipation of success. He had read his Plato and Aristotle, and received a grounding in general philosophy such as serves many writers for the stock-in-trade of their whole lives. His first work was not either an inspiration or an impertinence; judged by his subsequent standards it is immature; but it went a long way beyond anything that had been done in our language, up to that time.

He had before him Burke's essay on *The Sublime and Beautiful*, criticised at the time and more highly appraised later (*M. P.*, vol. ii.,[1]

[1] The reader will find the equivalent of abbreviated references by looking back to the page following the "Contents."

additional note 59). He had studied Alison, who was a mere devotee of the *éclaircissement*, referring everything to that fetish of his period and school, the association of ideas; but Ruskin, from his earliest time, was an opponent of the sceptical school, in whatever form; he did not at first accept Carlyle, but he was on Carlyle's side; and though he did not like what he learnt of German philosophy, since it came to him, I believe, through channels in which he suspected the taint of scepticism, he has been really on the side of those who have popularised the German philosophy of Kant, Fichte, and Hegel, in this country. The first of these acclimatisers of Transcendentalism was S. T. Coleridge, whose essays "on the Fine Arts," "on Taste," and "on Poetry or Art," attempted to render into English the teaching of Kant (the student may compare them in Bohn's edition of Coleridge's *Miscellanies, Æsthetic and Literary*, with, say, Schwegler's account of Kant's Art-philosophy in the *History of Philosophy*, translated by Dr. Hutchison Stirling). Ruskin quotes Coleridge in vol. i. of *Modern Painters* (p. 16) with no great respect; but it is evident that he had studied him; and he goes with him as far as Coleridge goes; but that is a very little way. Ruskin could not have a very great reverence for a thinker who drew his illustrations of artistic standards from Washington Allston and Bird, and "the print of Raphael's Galatea;" although Coleridge as a poet comes in for frequent encomium, and, in early days, the sincerest flattery,—imitation.

*7. His Relation to German Art-Philosophy.*—Of Kant at first hand, Ruskin could have known very little; he was unable to read German, and the translations and analyses which are now familiar to every student did not then exist. Otherwise it might be supposed that much of *Modern Painters* had been suggested by Kant; and that much of Ruskin's subsequent thinking had been based upon Hegel. Some little information he undoubtedly did acquire—as one sees from his parade of the word "Anschauung" (*M. P.*, vol. ii.), and perhaps the use of "Theoria" (on which the student should compare Mr. Bernard Bosanquet's translation of Hegel's *Introduction to the Philosophy of Fine Art*, pp. 73, 94), with many coincidences in point of view both in his early and in his later period. Take, for his early period, his statement of the use of science (*M. P.*, vol. ii. p. 8), and compare it with Hegel's remarks (Introduction, as above, p. 12); for his later period the definition of Art in the *Eagle's Nest*, "The modification of substantial things by our substantial power," along with Hegel's "modification of external things upon which [man] impresses the seal of his inner being, and then finds repeated in them his own characteristics;" or again, the doctrine of inspiration, in the "Inaugural Lectures at Oxford" (*L. A.*, § 44), "the common and vital, but not therefore less Divine, spirit, of which some portion is given to all living creatures," which is so very Hegelian in ring. These, with many other coincidences, and still more conclusively his attacks on the obscurity of German phraseology, make it seem impossible but that he should

have attempted an acquaintance with Hegel; but when, and how, I cannot trace. His extraordinary aptitude for picking up a hint, and making the most of it, inclines me to believe that all he knew of Hegel was gathered orally from some enthusiastic friend, who tried to expound the doctrines of the great German, and thought he had failed; not knowing, perhaps, the virtue of a seed sown in a fertile soil.

But whatever Mr. Ruskin may have learnt from the Germans, it was in such a fragmentary form that he was under no obligation to consider them in any sense his masters; and his ignorance of their language made it impossible for him to refer to their works in support of his statements. And when, later, he came across that development of Hegelianism which tended to destructive criticism of religion, he lost no opportunity of denouncing it, and with it, all from which it sprang. That was just because he was so much at one with the great masters of thought, and so heartily against scepticism in every form, whether it were the French School of the eighteenth century, or the German and English critical thinkers and materialists of the nineteenth.

8. *His Relation to Modern Thought.*—This statement may seem strange to the reader who remembers that, in his early days, at Oxford, Ruskin was the friend of men who have become famous in the lead of modern scientific research; and that he himself was as deeply interested in natural science as in art or literature. But it must not be forgotten that science, though it has now passed almost completely into the hands of the Materialist

School, was not at first identified with that attitude of mind which denied spirit; nor need it always be so identified. At present, physical science eliminates God out of the universe, and the soul out of man; it was not so in Ruskin's young days; and it may not be so in time to come. It is probably a passing phase of thought, like that which for a long time associated ethics exclusively with the doctrines of the enlightened selfishness school, and political economy with the Utilitarians; in either case the science has broken away from those who seemed to have a monopoly of it, and nowadays is approachable from the point of view of Spiritualism—I do not mean table-turning and psychical research, but that philosophy which believes in God and the human soul. And so Ruskin was not, in his early time, brought under the yoke of materialism, any more than Faraday or Dr. Buckland and the other scientists of half a century ago, before evolution seemed inevitable, before geology and Genesis had come into open collision. With all his interest in physics Ruskin in *Modern Painters* remained a theistic philosopher —not from want of appreciation of the subject, but because at that time theistic philosophy was possible; as it is not now, until a new great man arises to reconcile the contradictions of science and belief. Ruskin is on the side of Carlyle and Emerson, that is, on the side of Hegel; against the French *éclaircissement* and English imitation of it —scepticism, materialism, utilitarianism, and the attitude of thought—no new thing—which professes to "explain" everything on the cheapest terms.

That should give the student a clue to the real value of the theory of beauty and imagination (*M. P.*, vol. ii.) which, though expressed in religious phraseology, is really a piece of strictly philosophical analysis. It is not a mere sermon, any more than a chapter of Hegel is a mere sermon, in spite of the recurrence of the Name of God, and obvious applicability to didactic use. And it is found, on examination, to satisfy the requirements of no one sect of religionists, although its language invites their sympathy; it is not an attempt to suit Art to religion; but to express both in terms of all-embracing thought. We of the present day, who are accustomed to have our thought administered in a decoction of empiricism, flavoured with a little cynic astringency or syrup of sentiment, are apt to confound theistic philosophy with pulpit oratory; very good critics and friends of Mr. Ruskin talk of his early writing as merely declamatory—because they hardly grasp his place in the development of English thought; in which he stands, like Carlyle, midway between the internecine strife of theology and "science," crying out, not wholly in vain, for a reconciliation.

Without this view of his general attitude it is no wonder if he seem paradoxical and contradictory. The apparent simplicity of his address, his use of familiar terms, and Socratically commonplace metaphors, all tend to entangle the unwary reader in difficulties for which he was not prepared. But the widespreading subject of Art cannot be treated properly without such considerations; and Ruskin's Art-Teaching in particular is based upon

a securely-held system of general philosophy, and cannot be understood without some knowledge and recognition of its main tendency.

In method, however, he is distinctly modern. In his early days a great reaction was taking place against the generalising philosophy of the previous age. Science was teaching the necessity of true classification and analysis; of thorough dealing with particular facts, and the futility of mere *a priori* generalities. Of this movement, Mill's induction was the outward and visible sign; and Ruskin's method of criticism marks the parallel stage of advance in Art. Before his time, Art was a game, to be played according to rules, and to be judged as lost or won in strict compliance with prearranged principles. His contribution was the sympathetic analysis of the work of Art in its environment, which was practically a new departure; and in virtue of this he stands as one of the leaders of modern thought—"the most analytic mind in Europe," as Mazzini said—for better or worse, changing the current of events. He effected in Art the union of practical and theoretic work, which it is the pride of the century to have effected in science; he inaugurated the era of scientific criticism.

9. *His Successive Periods.*—We have been reviewing the influences which helped to develop Ruskin's powers, and form his beliefs at the time when he appeared before the public with his first great attempt—vol. i. of *Modern Painters.* That book originated, as every one knows, in the desire to vindicate Turner's later work from the charge

of untruthfulness, and to show that, with all drawbacks, he was the greatest landscapist the world had seen. Even before the author had matriculated at Oxford (October 1836) he had written an essay in defence of Turner's Juliet and Mercury and Argus, against the criticism of *Blackwood's Magazine*. This essay, long supposed to be lost, I have had the good fortune to find among the author's early papers; it is, of course, a juvenile production, but there have not been many boys of seventeen who could have composed it; and it contains the germ in thought and style of the book written after seven years' further study and deliberation.

The defence of Turner was the chief subject of his first appearance as Art-critic, but it soon led to a wider scope; for it became necessary to investigate the general theory of Art in order to show that Turner really complied with its fundamental principles, though breaking all the rules of ordinary æsthetics. The author's standards in 1842, when he wrote the first volume, were, in Art, English landscape and Academic orthodoxy; in religion, a strict Evangelicalism; and in style, Dr. Johnson.

To follow up his first volume, which had won a distinct success, his plan was to investigate the nature of beauty and imagination; and, as there was then beginning to be some talk about the early Christian painters of Italy, he felt that he could not go forward without study of mediæval styles. Accordingly he travelled by himself to Italy in 1845, and began with Lucca; where his

eyes were opened to a new manner of Art, unmentioned by Sir Joshua, and unknown to the English newspaper critics. In the place of the Northern Gothic, with which he was well acquainted, he found the Romanesque architecture of the twelfth century grandly exemplified in S. Frediano. He found Quercia's Ilaria di Caretto, which fixed his attention at once and for ever on the possibilities of Gothic sculpture in its highest development, as distinct from everything that was modelled upon classical traditions, pure and simple. And in painting he was gently initiated into the peculiar manner of fourteenth-century Art by the works of Fra Bartolommeo—especially by the "Madonna with the Magdalen," now occupying the most important place in the Pinacoteca. From thence he went on to Pisa and Florence, and ultimately to Venice, gaining an insight by severe study—that is, copying—of the methods of work and attitude of mind of the primitive masters and the Venetians. On his return he wrote his second volume, and became the recognised champion, not only of Turner and English landscape, but also of Angelico and Tintoret. And he found that there were certain qualities which all his heroes had in common—they were all *sincere*, not only with their painting but with their religion; they all "painted their impressions," and did not manufacture pretty pictures by rules-of-thumb; and this is his first point of contact with Carlyle.

In that temper, retaining his old beliefs about religion, but sympathising with pre-Reformation Catholicism, and feeling strongly the futility of

modern derivative Art and dwindling piety, he wrote *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849) as an episode to *Modern Painters*, to insist upon the necessity of the ancient spirit, if we would revive the Art of the ancients; and, as a still more elaborate exposition of his theorem, the *Stones of Venice* (1851-52).

Meanwhile a new movement had been taking place near at hand—the Pre-Raphaelite reform. It was, whether intentionally or not, the carrying out of advice given by Ruskin in his first volume; its chief characteristic was faithful study of natural phenomena and natural expression, as opposed to artificial ideals. It was only accidentally connected with the Gothic revival, and some of its early successes were made with subjects that had no special mediævalism of manner. It revealed a quite unexpected possibility of naturalistic Art, till then hardly known; although something of the sort had been attempted by Ruskin in his own drawings of natural detail, naturally grouped. Realism there had been in plenty, high finish, romantic subject; but never before the same sympathetic draughtsmanship and frank colour followed out into the intricacies of detail. These were the qualities of the Pre-Raphaelites that won Ruskin's regard, and made him their literary champion in his letters to various newspapers, in the pamphlet on "Pre-Raphaelitism" (1851), in the *Lectures on Architecture and Painting*, and in the third and fourth volumes of *Modern Painters* (published 1856). In these he showed that the new school, apparently so unlike his former

standards, Turner and Tintoret, was to be regarded as the beginning of a new development, which, if faithfully carried forward, might end in a modern epoch of Art, ranking with the great eras of the past. And full of happy auguries he wrote his lectures on *The Political Economy of Art* (1857), expecting "a good time coming," as many did in those years.

One reason for this hopeful attitude was the establishment of the Working Men's College, and Rossetti's Art Class there. It seemed as if great things were to be done, when one of the leaders of progress gave his strength, unasked and unpaid, to popularise his art, and met with some response. It seemed as though Art were again to live among the people. Ruskin threw himself into the work; and as text-books of the methods they pursued he wrote his *Elements of Drawing* (1855) and of *Perspective* (1859). *Modern Painters*, also, was completed by 1860, and his debt to the memory of Turner, as far as lay in him, was paid.

But the Working Men's College was a mere "drop in the bucket"; and it went a very little way toward quenching the world's thirst for better things. The good time tarried; and Ruskin could not but ask himself, "Why?" The problem was, not to bring down Art to the masses, which the Government Schools of Art were attempting to do, but to raise the masses to an appreciation of the real qualities involved in vital Art, to make them fully receptive and capable of it. He had been now for ten years teaching and preaching in honied words, and with apparent

acceptance, that people must be good or they could not paint, and yet they remained very much as they were; he now set himself for another ten years to find out what it was that hindered the fulfilment of his ideals, and the fruition of his hopes. From 1860 onward he worked at ethics and political economy, much derided, much regretted, as a lost leader who had strayed from the safe ground of eloquence and Art into the mire of Quixotism and Utopianism. But in all this he was only developing the main principle of his life —the many-sided doctrine of sincerity.

In 1869 he was elected to the Chair of Fine Art, newly endowed at Oxford, and at once began to revise his teaching. We have seen that his progress was continuous, by addition and extension of interests; and now he had to combine into a new system his ideal of landscape, as the Art of the nineteenth century, begun by Turner and left incomplete at Turner's death, complemented by the new beginning of Pre-Raphaelitism, but never carried beyond the stage of studentship; with these to join what could be learnt from the masterpieces of Greece and Italy; and in all, and through all, to *inculcate* (as literally as you like) the burden of his prophecy, "You must be good, you must all be good, or real art is impossible."

As they stand, the *Oxford Lectures* are the sum and crown of his work in Art-Teaching; what they might have been, with health and full measure of strength, it is useless to speculate. But they go deeper and reach farther than the more limited aim of the early treatises; and they

were so planned as to form a consistent and systematic review of all Art in its relation to all life,—surely too great an undertaking for the broken powers and divided interests with which Ruskin found himself, a wearied man and advanced in years, disappointed of his hopes and frustrated in his ambitions, in the world—to him all changed and unfamiliar—of modern Oxford.

A smiling crowd in his lecture-room; and in the drawing school, which he had endowed and furnished with the thought and care that no money could buy, three pupils (when I was there) out of all the University. After thirty years of fame and professions of public respect, his appeals to the public for the preservation of invaluable monuments—or for social schemes, the sum and substance of his life's teaching—were practically unheard. Similar schemes to-day, founded upon Ruskin's plans, are eagerly supported by all parties; objects which seemed impossible of attainment, both in the Art world and in the world of political economy, twenty years ago, are now within measurable distance, as many think. But Ruskin was before his age; people regretted the mellifluous chaplain of the Sistine and St. Mark's, to whose sermons they had become accustomed for many a year past; and here was he, grown hermit, and fanatic with new prophetic visions and a burden of Babylonian woe, and apocalyptic messages of reawakening to the churches he had helped to build in times gone by. And so his tone became rougher and bitterer, his utterances more broken and splenetic. Mistrusted by his former

friends and helpers; caricatured like Socrates as chief Sophist of the Æsthetes, in utter misunderstanding of his purpose; caged like Tasso, and baited to madness, for the amusement of the mob; he saw his doctrines one by one accepted, but from other lips; his work piece by piece performed, but by other hands. He had been before his age throughout; in the forefront of every battle; and all the thanks he got was, "C'est magnifique, mais ce n'est pas la guerre."

10. *His Writings on Art: Modern Painters Group.*—There are then two main periods in Mr. Ruskin's Art-Teaching—the first ranging from 1843, when he published the first volume of *Modern Painters*, till 1860, when the last volume appeared; and the second from 1870, when he began his Lectures at Oxford, till 1884, when he broke down in mind and body, and resigned his professorship. Before proceeding to his doctrines, it will help the student to review the books in which they are found, noting their chief contents and their position in the development of his thought. I omit mention of letters and catalogues, and works which do not mainly and professedly deal with Art.

*Modern Painters*, vol. i. (1843)—first attempt at a consistent Art-Philosophy; followed by slight preliminary review of the relation of landscape painting to natural phenomena, with reference to the truth of Turner's pictures.

*Modern Painters*, vol. ii. (1846)—the theory of Beauty and Imagination from a theistic standpoint, still keeping touch with Academic

principles, and tinged with Evangelical theology to a certain extent.

Reviews in the *Quarterly* of Lord Lindsay's *Christian Art* (1847) and Eastlake's *History of Oil-Painting* (1848), reprinted in *On the Old Road*, a collection of Mr. Ruskin's essays and pamphlets.

*The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849), a treatise on the conditions of greatness in the art of building and decoration, showing the influence of religious and moral sincerity, above all things, and its manifestation in the development of technical qualities.

A short notice of "Samuel Prout" (1849), reprinted from the *Art Journal* in *On the Old Road.*

A pamphlet on "Pre-Raphaelitism" (August 1851), reprinted in *On the Old Road.*

*The Stones of Venice*, vol. i. (February 1851)—*a priori* evolution of the various styles and features of architectural construction and ornament. Vols. ii. and iii. (1852) review the history of Venetian architecture in three periods—Byzantine, Gothic, and Renaissance; and examine the reaction of political and moral conditions upon the buildings and styles under notice; closing with a complete guide to all the great remains of Art in Venice. As a companion to this work, a portfolio of *Examples of the Architecture of Venice*, drawings by the author reproduced as fine engravings in line, mezzotint, and chromolithography.

*Lectures on Architecture and Painting*, given at Edinburgh in November 1853, advocating Gothic as a domestic style, and shortly stating

the character and aims of Turner and the Pre-Raphaelites.

A pamphlet on "The Opening of the Crystal Palace" (1854), criticising the style of the building, and appealing against the so-called Restoration of the monuments of ancient architecture—the first note of the ideas since carried into action by the Society for the Preservation of Ancient Buildings.

*The Elements of Drawing*—in three Letters to Beginners,—on First Practice, on Sketching from Nature, and on Colour and Composition, with Appendix,—Things to be Studied (1855). This work was based on the methods of the Pre-Raphaelites and of William Hunt, taught at the Working Men's College, and aimed at giving the pupil a command of the pen-point, used as an etching-needle, in the style of Rembrandt's etchings. In later times Mr. Ruskin thought it desirable to confine the use of this point, in student's practice, to pure outline, giving tone and shading with the brush. Consequently he refused to reprint *The Elements of Drawing*, and began *The Laws of Fésole* to supersede it, but never completed the new book.

In 1855-59 he published yearly *Notes on the Royal Academy* and other exhibitions, commenting on the progress of Pre-Raphaelitism and Naturalistic Landscape.

*Modern Painters*, vols. iii. and iv., appeared in 1856, treating of Naturalistic and Imaginative Ideals as opposed to Academicism; and the history of Landscape (vol. iii.); and of Mountain Beauty

—an analysis of Alpine structure and the spirit in which it can be made a subject of Art (vol. iv.)

*Notes on the Turners at Marlborough House* (1857).

*The Political Economy of Art*, lectures at Manchester during the Art Treasures Exhibition (1857), now reprinted under the title of *A Joy for Ever, and its Price in the Market.*

"Inaugural Address at the Cambridge School of Art" (29th October 1858), first published as a pamphlet, and reprinted in *On the Old Road*, stating the uses of Art and its abuse.

*The Two Paths* (1859), lectures delivered at the newly-opened South Kensington Museum and elsewhere on the application of Art to decoration and manufacture.

*The Elements of Perspective* (1859), a companion to the *Elements of Drawing*, now out of print.

"Sir Joshua and Holbein," a paper in the *Cornhill Magazine* (March 1860) comparing the two painters; reprinted in *On the Old Road.*

*Modern Painters*, vol. v. (1860), concluding the work with analyses of natural aspects in vegetation and clouds, "invention" or artistic imaginative composition, and a summary of the history of Art to the time of Turner in a series of contrasts of leading masters and their ideals.

11. *Works on Art: Oxford Lectures Group.*—In the interval between the completion of *Modern Painters* and the call to Oxford Mr. Ruskin was occupied mainly with social subjects and political economy. He wrote, in relation to Art, a paper

on "The Study of Architecture," read at the Royal Institute of British Architects, 15th May 1865, reprinted in *On the Old Road*; and ten papers called "The Cestus of Aglaia," in the *Art Journal* (1865-66), foreshadowing his Oxford teaching,—these are partly reprinted in *On the Old Road*, partly in *The Queen of the Air*; to which may be added various papers on Verona (1870).

The first series of *Oxford Lectures* (1870) is a careful restatement of his matured theory of Art, in its relation to national character, religion, morals, and practical use; and the chief laws of technical employment of line, light and shade, and colour.

*Aratra Pentelici* (1870) lays down the laws of development in Greek sculpture, and the moral derived therefrom; the concluding lecture, on Michelangelo and Tintoret, is published separately.

*The Eagle's Nest* (1872) treats of the relation of Art to Science.

*Ariadne Florentina* (1872) of the principles of engraving, as exemplified in early Italian etching and Holbein's woodcuts.

*Val d'Arno* (1873) of early Tuscan Art, in its relation to the history of Florence.

*The Laws of Fésole* (1877), a text-book intended to supersede *Elements of Drawing*, for use in the Ruskin Drawing School at Oxford. Vol. i. only was written.

Other courses of Lectures on Art were not published; and some of those given by the Slade Professor, and published among his works, are only indirectly connected with artistic subjects.

*Mornings in Florence* and *St. Mark's Rest* are guides to the ancient monuments and works of art in Florence and Venice. *Academy Notes* were resumed in 1875, for that occasion only.

"The Three Colours of Pre-Raphaelitism," papers in the *Nineteenth Century* (1878), reprinted in *On the Old Road*, restate the importance to Art of sincerity, and give Mr. Burne-Jones a place with the earlier Pre-Raphaelite masters.

Finally, during 1883, when Mr. Ruskin had returned to Oxford after several years' absence, he delivered the course of Lectures on Contemporary Painting, published as *The Art of England.*

The above works are all in print, and to be had of his publisher, Mr. George Allen, 8 Bell Yard, Temple Bar, with the exception of *The Elements of Drawing*, *the Elements of Perspective*, and, for the present at least, the *Notes on the Academy.* Some of the works are to be had in cheap editions, within the reach of students of ordinary means; who, if they wish to get a good working knowledge of Mr. Ruskin's Art-Teaching, ought to possess the *Lectures on Art*, *Two Paths*, *Eagle's Nest*, and *A Joy for Ever* (*Political Economy of Art*)—four volumes at five shillings each; these four are, on the whole, the most important to read and reread. Four more small volumes, illustrated, costing seven shillings and sixpence each, are desirable, namely *Aratra Pentelici*, *Ariadne Florentina*, *Architecture and Painting* and *The Seven Lamps.* The second volume of *Modern Painters* is published in a small edition, with new introduction and notes (1883), at ten

shillings, and is useful as supplementing the above-mentioned on many points, and giving, with *The Seven Lamps*, an idea of the author's earlier teaching. And *The Laws of Fésole*, ten shillings, should be obtained by those who wish to follow out Mr. Ruskin's method in practical work with pencil and brush.

As the object of the following chapters is to help the isolated and independent student of Mr. Ruskin's works, I shall assume that my reader possesses at least the first four cheap volumes, and that he means to study them in the same spirit in which he would study the Republic of Plato or the Ethics of Aristotle—that is, not as mere current literature, as charming essays, or keen reviews, but as important sections of a complete system of thought, only to be understood in the light of an adequate knowledge of the circumstances under which they were written, and the aims to which they were addressed. The critic or student of Art may or may not ultimately accept Ruskin's teaching, but he owes it to himself to understand it.

## CHAPTER II

### THE NATURE OF ART

12. *Real and False Art.*—To be quite formal and systematic we ought to ask, before proceeding to further inquiries, this question: "Is Art a real thing, worth serious consideration? or only a chimæra, a delusion? Does it exist?" For it is no use examining the nature, end, or use of anything, unless we are sure that our terms are not mere empty and idle words; and especially in the case of Art this is worth while, because to many people painting and sculpture are vanities, about which it matters very little what is thought or what is done. Even to some who sincerely delight in them, they are very subordinate to what they call the serious business of life; they do not for a moment rank with grave subjects of thought, such as science or politics, morality or religion. But if Art really exists as a vital fact of the universe and an important element in human life, if it grows and flourishes and decays like any other great human institution, if it has an actual influence on mankind, or serves as an index and exponent of progress and civilisation; then the

study of Art must be really valuable, if not indispensable.

Mr. Ruskin everywhere assumes that this is the case. But he distinguishes, throughout his writings, between this Real Art and something that pretends to rank with it, but is merely an imitation. For instance, he mentions the forms of what is not Art, but inartistic production, that exist among us (*L. A.*, § 82): and speaking of the painters of the day he says that modern life is so broken up and imitative that sometimes you not only cannot tell what a man is, but whether he *is*;—a spirit, or an echo (*L. A.*, § 75). That is to say, much that passes for Art is a mockery, a superficial imitation of the real thing, presenting no true reality to study, no universal laws of life to expound; it is derivative, and content with cold reproductions of common types; it aims at no sincere and honest original effort. And the persons who produce these derivative works, however ingenious and clever, are not real artists, but manufacturers of pictures or carvings. Strictly speaking, he says, what people call inferior painters are in general *no* painters (*T. P.*, Appendix 1).

Whenever he uses the word Art, therefore, he understands Real Art as distinguished from the mockeries of it, that distort its reality as in a mirage; Real Art possessing and exhibiting a certain vital power, which, like any other form of life, is subject to law and is material for scientific inquiry. Its possession of vitality is shown by its history, by the rise and decay of schools, and by their correspondence with contemporary phases of

national life; and shown further by its influence on men, its real help or hindrance to them as giving right pleasure and true instruction, or the reverse. He does not mean that Art is real only when it is moral and didactic, nor does he refuse to consider any in which he detects an evil tendency, an influence producing or indicating low civilisation and base morals. Such may be only too real; though he is never weary, as every reader knows, of demonstrating the catastrophe wrought or indicated by it. With Mr. Ruskin both Science and Art are looked upon as valuable in proportion to the nobility of their subject-matter; so that there is real Art which is bad, just as real Science may be used for bad ends—as the compounding of poisons. But Science is false or sham when it proceeds upon unfounded assumptions, and treats of non-existent materials; when its conclusions are false, not true: and Art is sham when it is false and futile, representing forms which the artist has neither seen nor even dreamed, or professing to translate emotions which the artist has never felt. Parallel with the pseudo-sciences there is Sham Art—a parasite of the vital growth, a shadow of the substance; and it is the too frequent presence of this Sham that makes some people doubt the existence of the Real, and others doubt the validity of an inquiry into its nature and laws.

13. *Aphoristic Definitions.*—It is not entirely a gain that Mr. Ruskin is so skilled in epigram and aphorism. Readers sometimes carry away a phrase from his writings which, when the context is

forgotten, misleads them ; for though right in one connection, it may be wrong in another. And from the mere fact that his aphoristic definitions of Art are so various, being given with the purpose of fixing a certain limited idea, it seems sometimes that they are insufficient and inharmonious. But his chief concern is generally to mark off Real Art from Sham ; for instance, when he says : Art is a language expressing ideas, and the greatest Art is that which expresses the greatest number of the greatest ideas (*M. P.*, vol. i. pp. 7, 11), which was his first position with regard to his subject. In another context, Art has for its business to praise God (*M. P.*, vol. i. p. xxiii.) ; and again, Great Art is the expression of the mind of a God-made great man (*M. P.*, vol. iii. p. 44) ; and, differently intended, Art is the expression of delight in God's work (*M. P.*, vol. v. p. 206). From that he glides to —All great Art is praise (*L. F.*, chap. i.) ; and, Art is the exponent of ethical life (*L. A.*, § 27), which leads the way to the notion of it as merely human labour regulated by human design (*L. A.*, § 172), or, any modification of things substantial by substantial power (*E. N.*, Lect. i.), so long as it states a true thing or adorns a serviceable one (*L. A.*, § 98). Fine Art is that in which the hand, the head, and the heart of man go together (*T. P.*, § 54).

This selection of his sayings on the Nature of Art does not include anything like a philosophical definition ; they are descriptive ; and they describe different phases of Art as it appeared to the writer at different periods of his thought. Ruskin's teaching, like Art, has a vital power ; and one of

the evidences of its vitality is its growth. To those who find saplings useful for walking-sticks, a full-grown tree is otiose; and many who assented to *Modern Painters* regret the broad spreading ramifications of his later work. But at the same time this candid self-criticism and continual reconstruction of belief is a warrant of sincerity. It is a cheap thing to adopt a system and stick to it; when it is cut and dried it is apt to command less confidence; but you trust the living bough.

But from these aphorisms it is plain that Mr. Ruskin proposes to his readers two distinctions: the first between Real Art and Sham; and the second between Great Art and something else that is Real but not Great. Both these distinctions are difficult to make at the moment; and even when the subject under consideration is in the comfortable distance of past history, judgments may differ on a particular work. But the distinction is a real one. Sham Art is derivative, insincere, inadequate: Real Art is a living organism, inviting study like any other organism, with its natural laws of growth and its vital influence on mankind. And some of it is Great.

14. *Great Art and High Art.*—In the last century it was commonly thought that all portrait-painting, and genre, and still life, and what we popularly call decorative work, as well as landscape for the most part, were inferior kinds; in contradistinction to which stood something that was called High Art. The most accessible exposition of the doctrine is that of Sir Joshua

Reynolds in his discourses. He summed up the Academic teaching, and formulated rules for the production of High Art; not claiming that he followed that manner himself, for he was only a portraitist, and in his heart admired the Venetians, who were not thought to rank so high as the Roman School of Michelangelo and Raphael. He put the whole art of painting under four categories, and deduced, from accepted examples, the principles of their production: how to create High Art—the Grand Style.

*Grand Invention*, he says, is the generalisation of the mental visions which all have of any incident, not the particular private view of any one person. "Some circumstances of minuteness and particularity" may give an air of truth, and be admitted with caution. But truth is not admitted for its own sake. For instance, St. Paul is not to be painted as weak in bodily presence; Alexander the Great not, as he was, of short stature; Agesilaus, not as deformed. But what the public in general would imagine them to be, so they must be represented.

*Grand Expression* also allows no particularisation; when Bernini sculptured his David as biting the lip in the act of slinging, he sinned against grandeur. The "blitheness and repose" of a Greek god is the model on which every countenance and attitude should be formed.

In *Colouring*, because the remains of ancient statuary are colourless, for aught he knew, and because Michelangelo, for their sake, denied himself the glory and the gold which his predecessors

and patrons loved, the Grand Style allows no "artful play of little lights or variety of tints." It should be harmonious to monotony, or distinct, like martial music.

And in *Drapery*, for that is the final category of Academic picture-making, there must be no discrimination of stuffs, but merely folds of classical curtains and robes.

We know how this advice was taken, and what came of it. The Grand Historical School, working on Reynolds's rules, became the laughing-stock of Europe; it became the mere reflex of used-up ideas and worn-out forms, without vitality, without influence or interest; mere Sham Art. And so Mr. Ruskin was led to inquire into the subject from another point of view (*M. P.*, vol. iii.), not now seeking external signs, but analysing the more intimate motives of production. And from his inquiry he was led on to the conviction that Art has its root and origin in something deeper than formulæ; that it is really conditioned by the whole nature of the artist, by his morality, his position in the community, his relation to the world and to God;—that Art is great in proportion as the producer is great—not only as an artist, but as a man.

In reading Ruskin we have therefore to remember that beside his development of personal attitude to the question, he has two main objects in view—the discrimination of Real Art from everything else, and the valuation of it as greater or less in the sum of its achievement.

15. *Art and Manufacture.*—There are many

degrees of greatness among the various kinds of Art, although they are all true and real: and from the highest efforts of painting and sculpture they pass in unbroken series to the minor handicrafts, which may be artistic, if they are carried on by artists; or they may be mere manufacture, and not Art at all. A manufacture is the product of the hands, with a minimum of brain power. In mechanical employments the skill is a sort of reflex-action: when the head is allowed to busy itself it destroys the manual skill by hesitation as to method and adaptation; and the workman is told not to think, but to do what he knows. But when the head must needs direct the hands, consciously, and as a dominant and continual guide, the work is a form of Art: a low form, but a true one. Every employment can be turned, in some of its branches, into an Art; carpentry, or agriculture, or the making of fabrics for clothes, can be treated as a manufacture, or as an art; and it is usually the case that when these things become artistic, and attest thought, they are considered more valuable. But they do not reach the rank of Fine Art until the whole man is employed; and the whole man has more than hands and a head; he has feelings and emotions, what is popularly called heart. And when the emotions become the dominant power they bring in the likes and dislikes of the worker, they display his tastes, they reveal an attempt to impart Beauty to the work which the head endowed only with utility.

And so we get the lower Arts, in which the

emotions have little play, and Beauty no conceded position; and the Fine Arts, no matter to what material adapted. Decoration of any kind is just as truly a Fine Art as painting pictures, though there is not the same scope for the whole greatness of a profound intellect and wide sympathies to display itself. This more extended view of Art is the chief difference between Ruskin's earlier and his later writings: in *Modern Painters* he looked at Art as a Language; in his more recent writings he looks at it as an Activity, as the production of concrete objects in obedience to certain instincts—of which more hereafter.

16. *Ideas of Power.*—Yet he did not neglect the handicraft-element, even in his earliest theory. His statement, at the outset of *Modern Painters*, that Art is a Language expressing Ideas of Power, Imitation, Truth, Beauty, and Relation implies that he did not mean to regard painting as a mere vehicle for what is rightly discriminated by artists as the "literary subject," to the exclusion of the "artistic subject." He notes that many thoughts are dependent on the language in which they are clothed; and that certain ideas belong to language itself. The first set of ideas, those of Power, involve the purely artistic process of the creation of a work of art, and mean, partly, what we call Execution and Technical ability. The pleasure they produce is that felt by the worker in his triumph over difficulties, and by the spectator in witnessing the triumph. And although the purpose of *Modern Painters* was to call the attention of critics to the thought and truth in Turner's later work,

the author, with a candour uncommon in special pleaders, began by showing that part of the interest of Art is in the Power shown by the dexterity and craftsmanship of the artist.

When this interest is the admiration and wonder at an inexplicable talent,—as much an instinct as the power of nest-building in a bird or hive-building in a bee,—it partakes of that high pleasure with which, as we shall see, mankind contemplates the nobler forms of Beauty; it is the contemplation of the artist as himself a work, so to speak, of Divine Art. But when it is merely the applause of the mob at a cheap *tour de force*,—the attention of the conjuror's apprentice trying to learn the trick of it, to the entire oblivion of anything higher in the world than executive dexterity, then it panders to the most prevalent and pernicious form of Sham Art. Nobody has more highly appreciated Execution than Ruskin; from the *finesse* of Turner's hand, inconceivably microcosmic (*T. P.*, Appendix 4), to the colossal brush-strokes of Tintoret, painting tree-trunks in two touches apiece. Dürer's severe and subtle pen-stroke; Meissonier's realism in miniature; the free handling of Reynolds, and the flawless modelling of Holbein have alike won his praise. It is only where the "finish" is thoughtless niggling, as in Hobbima's trees, or the "freedom" is licentious slapdash—*si exemplum quæris, circumspice*—that Ruskin steps in with his veto. Execution as a source of pleasure in Art, nay, as an integral part of the aim and purpose of it, he is far from despising.

But the aim of Art is something more than

Execution; and the idea of Power suggests not only the sense of energy perceived in the artist, but also the sense of great forces in action represented in his subject,—what is called Sublimity. This has been usually separated from Beauty, as if the two were quite distinct and co-ordinate aims, as if Art had two aims of equal value and indifferent application. Ruskin dismisses Sublimity from that position, pointing out that it is not foreign to Beauty, but the effect on the mind of greatness, of infinity, which, as we shall see, is one of the elements of the Beautiful (*M. P.*, vol. i. p. 40). Etymologically the Sublime is what "lifts one off his feet"; and the feeling that there is a something infinite and terrible, of forces and laws past comprehension, even in the fashioning of the least flower or pebble, grows upon the instructed mind into the same sense of Sublimity as that which is forced upon the ignorant and unreflective by a thunderstorm or a cataract. S. T. Coleridge was fond of telling how, at the Falls of the Clyde, he pronounced the scene "essentially sublime"; and heard with contempt a lady rejoin, "Yes, it is beautiful." The beauty of the lines of rushing foam, of crystalline transparency and iridescent mystery were nothing to him—as doctrinaire in Kantian Art-Philosophy—in comparison with the overwhelming certainty that if he fell in he was sure to be drowned. But Coleridge, as poet, could describe the sublimity, the fearsomeness of the sight of a frail and lovely figure in the moonlight "beautiful exceedingly." I do not mean that the Sublime and the Beautiful are one and

the same, but they are two developments of one principle.

Sublimity is therefore not to be classed as a separate, collateral factor of Art, but as closely connected with Beauty on the one hand and Imagination on the other (§ 60); and Great Art is, in the first place, conditioned by these ideas of Power, by consummate execution, and the highest reach of nobility in the forms portrayed. Of the other ideas named at the beginning of *Modern Painters*, those of Relation seem to be specially connected with the Imagination and its work; those of Imitation and Truth involve the discussion of the Mimetic Instinct and the Representation of Nature. They must be noticed in a slight preliminary way, in order to define the limits of Art, before we can definitely plan out our subject.

17. *Machinery and Art.*—We have seen that manufacture is not Art; but we are accustomed to meet with all manner of goods professing to be artistic, yet produced by machinery,—the extreme form of manufacture, made not only without head-work, but without hand-work, as far as possible. No doubt head-work and hand-work went to the making of the machines in the first instance; but that hardly affects the statement that the patterned products of a steam-loom are quite distinct from the products of a hand-loom, as these last are from pure artistic embroidery. If hand-manufacture be not Art, still less is steam-manufacture, though its results are often so interesting, and display so much ingenuity, that the public is content with the sham, and many critics

hardly venture to incur the ridicule of the thoughtless and the enmity of the trade by upholding a logical discrimination.

Mr. Ruskin was led to his position by considering the effect of machinery upon the life of the workman (*S. V.*, vol. ii. chap. vi.) He found that where the minor arts and crafts are treated in a purely artistic spirit, they react in a wholesome manner on the producers, who become of necessity more intelligent, more interested in their work, and consequently happier. Where machinery is introduced, the human capacities of the workman are minimised: the qualities of head and heart are not wanted, and even skill of hand is reduced to its lowest terms.

Not only that, but the work itself loses its interest and higher qualities of beauty; what it gains in superficial neatness it loses in refinement; it is vulgarised, because there is no imagination put into it. Consequently all the products of machinery tend to become Sham Art, in proportion to the part which machinery plays in their production. Real Art does not depend upon materials and tools; a great artist could make great works with the very simplest,—such as a bottle of ink and a deal board, painting with his finger; for "the imagination amends them." Even the reproduction by mechanical processes of paintings and drawings loses many of their qualities,—and this is the case even with the most marvellous of recent inventions, as any one can see who has the opportunity of comparing original drawings with what are published as facsimiles. Still more is it true of the

great mass of decorative work, cheaply produced by machinery.

It is not to be thought for a moment that Mr. Ruskin would refuse the advantages to utility which are gained by machine power. His position is quite simple. As long as useful articles can be made plentiful, without involving the slavery and degradation of the workman, he encourages manufacture; but when it is supposed that Art can thus be cheapened, he points out that there is an impassable gulf between utilitarian manufacture and Real Art; and the cheapening of a hybrid between the two serves only to blind the public to the real uses and true standards of Art (*L. A.*, § 10).

18. *Photography and Art.*—The Ideas of Imitation and Truth, which it is the business of Art to give, might be thought to be attained by photography; and in some sense photography claims its place on the borderland of Art (§ 61). But there are two reasons why photography fails to take a place alongside of painting and sculpture. First, that it gives no really accurate representation of Nature: the lowering of tone makes it impossible to get the effect of a landscape; and the falsification of values, even with the most ingenious appliances to evade it, leads to falsification of landscape detail. Artists who work from photographs know how much allowance has to be made for these disturbances; they know that the perspective of an interior or a figure, the modelling of certain masses of drapery or rock-form, and many other parts of the picture, are not to be strictly copied from

photographs. So that mere truth, which is the boast of photography, is not fully attained; though perhaps, with improvements in management and appliances, truth may eventually be secured in other subjects, as it is already in the wonderful instantaneous photography of facial expression.

But even if that were done, Art is, by its very nature, the expression of human feeling, the representation of external things as seen through a human eye and imaged in a human mind. The interest in Art is quite different from the interest in Nature. In Art we look for the record of man's thought and power, but photography gives that only in a quite secondary degree; every touch of a great picture is instinct with feeling, but however carefully the objects of his picture be chosen and grouped by the photographer, there his interference ends. It is not a mere matter of colour or no colour, but of Invention and Design, of Feeling and Imagination, the very qualities which make Art interesting and great. Photography is a matter of ingenuity; Art of genius. And if it be said that Nature is more beautiful than Art, which is true, Mr. Ruskin replies that a photograph is not Nature; and that nobody who really sees and loves natural beauty pretends that it is adequately replaced by a photograph (*L. A.*, § 172).

Photography is, however, extremely valuable as a record of certain facts, and as a help to the reproduction of designs (*L. A.*, § 10); but we must not confuse its service with that of Art. As in the case of manufacture, it is a separate thing.

Fine Art is not science, it is not manufacture, it is not photography. It is—I do not attempt a philosophical definition, but to mark it off from these it may be called the thoughtful and purposeful expression of human emotion.

19. *Programme of the Subject.*—At the outset of an inquiry into the nature of Art it is hardly possible to prove every statement and follow it out in detail. Much of what has been here noted down will be treated again more fully; though the limits of any handbook, and the intention of this one in particular, preclude a full development of special arguments. But we have now got Mr. Ruskin's view of what he means by Art, and what he separates from his conception of it. We have next to examine the End of Art, its purpose or aim: and then to find its Uses, for we have seen that though its business is not primarily utilitarian, it has an influence on human life. Then we shall be at liberty to proceed to the different sorts and conditions of Art, remembering that Mr. Ruskin has not especially treated Music and Literature and Acting and several other of the Fine Arts, though many remarks upon them can be gleaned from his writings: but he has devoted himself to plastic and graphic Art—what he calls Formative Art. I think no apology needed for confining ourselves to those questions which he has answered at length; and I feel that it would be forcing his doctrines if in a work of this sort we attempted to apply them to departments of the subject for which they were not intended. Finally, we shall notice his advice as to the more practical

side of the question; though it involves theory and general considerations, just as the theoretic examination of the End and Use of Art involves practical application.

And so, without misleading sub-titles of division, the reader may be asked to note that the earlier parts of the book are mainly theoretical, and the later part mainly practical. Beginning with the Purpose of Art, we shall discuss Ruskin's teaching on its relation to Truth, Beauty, and Imagination in the first part. The second part will treat of the Uses of Art in its relation to Religion and Morality, Sociology and Political Economy. The third part, dealing with the concrete products of Art, will divide them into their departments, and examine the virtues of each, concluding with Mr. Ruskin's doctrines on matters of technical practice and study and criticism.

The review of history, the detailed criticism of schools, the description of special works of Art, and the characterisation of artists, hardly seem to form part of Mr. Ruskin's Art-Teaching; they are rather subjects of Art-Criticism. And indeed to do justice to his exposition of the example and precept of Greek Art; the virtues and vices of Gothic; the secret and interest of the primitive masters, one by one; the glories of Venice; the mysteries of Dürer and Holbein; the magic of Reynolds and his cycle; the aims and achievements of Turner; and to relate in sufficient fulness all his hopes and fears for modern painting, from the Pre-Raphaelites to Miss Kate Greenaway; all his plans and proposals for modern architecture,

from the Oxford Museum to that of St. George's Guild;—to do all this is so utterly beyond the scope of a book on his Art-Teaching that the least said about it will be soonest mended.

So I have to set down his doctrines, not his criticisms; his teaching, not his examples; and I mention the omission simply that the reader may know it for intentional. I do not think it enough to quote his words, either in affairs of criticism or of teaching. Much false impression may be given by exact quotations; and the appearance of authenticity only strengthens the falsehood. If you want his words, read his books: for that is the end to which I desire to lead. It is useless to compile an Art-Philosophy for the sake of summing up its results; that is like taking a walk for the sake of getting home. Unless you get the exercise of every step, the benefit of every breath of fresh air, unless you bring back the recollection of things seen by the wayside, and glimpses perhaps of worlds less realised in the far distance, you might as well have sat in the doorway all the afternoon. No doubt it is from some feeling of this sort that Mr. Ruskin prefers to dole out his teaching in letters and lectures; and never seems to come to any general conclusions, or to advance any formulated system. But as we have seen, and shall see, he has travelled over the whole of the ground; and I have tried to survey it and map it for the benefit of those who follow him in his walks abroad. It is a poor substitute for a tour in Switzerland to pore over the maps in the guide-book; and yet, before setting out, it is

well to know the lie of the land; and after the excitements of the trip are over even the guide-book may be pleasant, and sometimes instructive, reading.

The first question we have to approach is, "What is Mr. Ruskin's idea of *Truth*?"—that familiar watchword of his teaching and his school. To get at a complete answer—and this is so important a subject that it demands a complete answer—we must follow the development of his thought out of the pre-existing chaos of opinion, the conflict between imitative Realism and generalising Idealism.

## CHAPTER III

### IMITATION

20. *The Purpose of Art.*—It is a very old and widely-spread belief that the End of Art, its business and aim, is to imitate Nature—that it is mimetic; either taking this for its chief aim, or its only one. And it has been commonly supposed that the more closely and deceptively the imitation is carried out, the better is the Art; and that nothing more is required if this can be got. All the ancient and standard authors, from Aristotle to Leonardo da Vinci, seem to support this opinion. Aristotle (*De Poet.* ii.) thought that painting and the drama were alike mimetic, and that higher or lower style depended upon the models chosen for imitation. Leonardo remarks (chap. cccl.) that if you follow his rules your picture will be like Nature itself, seen in a large looking-glass. Such were the theories which were in vogue at the time of the great artists of Greece and of Renaissance Italy. But even in the age of Giotto, when the resources of Art did not allow of anything nearly approaching deceptive imitation, the same belief was held. Dante (*Purgatorio,*

canto xii.), in describing the perfect pictures inlaid on the terrace of the purgatorial mount, makes it quite plain that the reason he thought them perfect was their imitative resemblance to living nature; and he devotes nearly half a canto to their praise, emphatically on that understanding.

But when the method of painting had been so developed and perfected that imitative resemblance was actually achieved, it was found that something more was wanting. The Dutch carried realism to a high pitch, and "painted a cat or a fiddle," as Reynolds said, "so that you could take it up," and yet remained confessedly vulgar—in the lower walks of Art. It was thus proved that the earlier notion was a mistake,—if it had really been held by these thinkers of the Greeks, the Mediævals and the early Renaissance,—that the *only* aim of Art was imitation. But it is extremely unlikely that Aristotle and Dante and Leonardo would have assented to the proposition in that form; they would maintain, however, that a close correspondence with Nature is the *first* and most important purpose of Art. Their less discerning followers, uneducated connoisseurs, and the public generally, misunderstood and overstated the doctrine—naturally enough, for it is felt by inartistic people that any deceptive imitation is wonderful and delightful. But the *reductio ad absurdum* of the doctrine in the vulgar realism of post-Renaissance Schools produced a reaction in thought—a reaction which began with Academicism, and found its most able English exponent in Reynolds.

The Grand Style, as he explained it (§ 14), was supposed to have nothing to do with Truth, but to exhibit Beauty; it did not deal in resemblance to Nature, but in exposition of Ideals. Thus in Ruskin's early days there were two competing theories of the Purpose or End of Art—one that it was Truth, or what they supposed to be Truth, namely, Deceptive Imitation; and the other that it was Beauty, or what was supposed to be Beauty, namely, the Academic Ideal. As we shall see, Ruskin was gradually enabled to correct both these theories, and to unite them into one philosophical doctrine; though the main body of the public, brought up in one or other school, and powerless to shake off the one-sided ideas of popular reasoning, is apt to mistake his insight for inadequacy, and his reconciliation for self-contradiction.

At first, having to defend Turner from the Realist School, and having been brought up under the influence of Reynolds, without however accepting the Academic belief in its entirety, he argued against the theory of Imitation (*M. P.*, vol. i.) Later on his sympathy with Pre-Raphaelitism drew his attention to the possibilities of refined Realism, till then unknown, and to the insufficiency of Academic Idealism; and he argued on behalf of the attempt to imitate (*M. P.*, vol. iii.) But in both periods he kept within the limits of just criticism, and emerged from analysis into the construction and statement of a wider and sounder doctrine in his *Oxford Lectures*.

21. *Deceptive Imitation.*—Against the common

vulgar Realism which delights in deception he urged a series of arguments (*M. P.*, vol. i. pt. ii. sec. 1) :—

It is possible only with trivial subjects; you can imitate fruit, not a tree. The Dantesque ideal of imitative art is wholly beyond human power.

It is easy, and does not involve the real difficulties of Art. The realistic representation of more extended subjects is extremely difficult, but in this there is no attempt at deception (*M. P.*, vol. iii., additional note 1).

It represents crass matter only, and Art can, and therefore should, record qualities, emotions, thoughts.

It addresses the senses, the perceptive faculty; and says nothing to the intellect, the conceptive faculty.

It gives rough, inaccurate, and general resemblances, sufficient only for the least-informed observer.

It is limited in range; and if we were to paint nothing but what could be illusively imitated, Art would be confined to still-life and the simplest treatment of the figure.

It easily falls under empirical rules, and becomes a merely mechanical operation.

It addresses the lower orders of humanity, and rests content with the applause of those least qualified, by training of perception and cultivation of intellect, to judge.

It gives the least valuable characteristics, whenever it approaches a subject in which—as in a portrait—there is a choice between an average of

less exalted moments and an ideal of rarely-seen energy or beauty.

To all this may be added that Art has not at its command Nature's full power of light and dark, so that, except in the poorest effects, it is impossible to match the real tones; that Art cannot give the stereoscopic effect of binocular vision, and it is absurd to paint half the picture as a blur—for it does not look so in Nature—to symbolise the phenomena of focus; that part of the effect of Nature consists in quantity of detail which Art can only suggest; and that movement—necessary to the effect of a passing smile, a breeze, and so on—can be represented only under certain conventional limitations. And perhaps it might be worth remembering that the story of Zeuxis and Parrhasius records merely one of those tournaments in which artists are fond of engaging—not the deliberate statement of the End of Art as held by artists and critics of the time. As a matter of fact the testimony of animals to imitative painting is worth very little; an extremely poor daub of a portrait will deceive a cat or a parrot; there are stories of dogs being "taken in" with the shadow of the hands making a "rabbit on the wall"; and the clumsiest mimicry of the human form divine will scare crows. In proportion to the knowledge and observation of the spectator deceptive imitation becomes difficult or impossible; and it is absurd to make *that* the aim of Art which postulates stupidity in the beholder.

22. *The Mimetic Instinct.*—Before proceeding to the gradual development of Mr. Ruskin's

doctrine as it unfolded itself in time, it will be interesting to compare the final form it took. In the *Lectures on Greek Sculpture* (1870) he traces the beginning of plastic art to "the instincts of Mimicry, Idolatry, and Discipline" (*A. P.*, § 43); that is, the natural desire to make resemblances of things, to love and play with them or worship them, and to bring out, in doing so, the sense of law and order which is the foundation of our ideas of beauty and artistic composition. The two later instincts correspond with the "Imagination and Beauty" of his earlier writings; the "mimetic instinct" is the "Truth" of *Modern Painters*.

It begins in history with the bone-carvings of the cave-dwellers in Neolithic time; and in the individual with the child's first attempts to draw, and earlier idealisation of any rolled rag into a doll. It is simply one of the needs of human life; and all Art is a sort of doll-play, which may one day be superseded, as doll-play is, by love of kind and intelligent care and culture of fellow-beings. Meanwhile Re-presentation is the aim of Art—the turning of clay into creature, of form into fancy, of letter into spirit, begetting and bearing new beings in the likeness of the old: what can we say more than doll-play, mock-parentage, rendering inanimate matter or alien form into the likeness of things we love? And so the ancients were right; but the misstatement of their doctrine was wrong; and all that was urged against vulgar deceptive imitation as practised by inferior realists will hold good. That kind of imitation is easy

to do, futile when done; but representation is not, therefore, to be condemned and replaced by Academic idealisation.

23. *Reprcsentation.*—"All second-rate artists will tell you that the object of Fine Art is not resemblance, but some kind of abstraction more refined than reality. Put that out of your heads at once. The object of the great Resemblant Arts is, and always has been, to resemble; and to resemble as closely as possible. It is the function of a good portrait to set the man before you in habit as he lived, and I would we had a few more that did so. It is the function of a good landscape to set the scene before you in its reality; to make you, if it may be, think the clouds are flying and the streams foaming. It is the function of the best sculptor—the true Dædalus—to make stillness look like breathing, and marble look like flesh" (*A. P.*, § 122). And then Ruskin goes on to tell the story of his juvenile drawing of Como, "composed" and abstracted, with the impossible boat and the ill-represented water. This drawing was done before he went to Oxford, probably in 1835; that is to say, seven years before writing the first volume of *Modern Painters*. He had not reached the attitude of mind in which he attacked vulgar imitation on behalf of Turner; so that this bit of self-criticism must not be considered to touch our last section but one—it touches only his childish ideals.

You feel this on proceeding to § 125, in *Aratra Pentelici*; for there he states that the resemblance must be acceptable "to people who know what

Nature is like. You see this is at once a great restriction, as well as a great exaltation of our aim." In other words, the "deceptive resemblance" of the *Oxford Lectures* has nothing in common with the "deceptive imitation" of *Modern Painters*, and the criticism of the one is not annulled by the advocacy of the other. Deception in true Art is an illusion of the imagination; in false Art of the senses. Turner's "Falls of Terni" is so skilfully done that, "in a good light, you may all but believe the foam and the sunshine are drifting and changing among the rocks" (*A. P.*, § 126); and yet there is no illusion of the *senses* as you hold the tiny drawing in your hand, with its white mount and oak frame; it is quite another sort of deception from that of the frieze at the Capitol of Washington (I am told), where you cannot see whether the work is painting or sculpture—because you cannot climb near to see; or the coarse realism of a panorama; or the embossed flies and halfpence on a Christmas card.

And, then, when you are told that Art, to be great, must represent honourable things and true emotions (*A. P.*, §§ 134, 135), the gulf between artistic representation and vulgar imitation widens, for the latter, as we saw, can only undertake low subjects, and encourages coarseness of feeling; while the former is that "appeal to the imagination" of which so much has been written; the power of consummate art to lift one off his feet, and transport him into the land of dreams.

24. *Fact and Effect.*—How, then, is the appeal

made? The appeal to the senses is chiefly got by clever management of strong chiaroscuro, by fixing the picture with regard to the light, and carefully arranging the approaches to it, so that its pictorial nature is not at once discovered. If the End of Art were to be attained only by these extraneous and adventitious circumstances, —if it were mere "effect," such an end would justly condemn the whole thing to the limbo of vanities.

The appeal to the imagination is made by supplying the mind with facts; arranging them in such order, and selecting them with such foresight that they shall tell upon the mind as the real facts do; and heightening the record by characteristic form and harmonious colour—that is, giving the utmost possible truth. Such facts are not needed to deceive birds and beasts; the arrangement of them would be lost on one whose imagination is dormant,—who expects only an appeal to his senses; and, consequently, the result of artistic representation is often quite inadequate to satisfy him.

There is, however, a sort of Art which does not deal thus with Facts; it is not necessarily imitative or representative, being occupied in the actual production of beautiful form and colour; and this kind is Decorative or Abstract Art. But still, as we shall see, the highest ornament aims at giving "the utmost ascertainable truth respecting visible things and moral feelings; and this pursuit of *fact* is the vital element of the Art-power —that in which alone it can develop itself to its utmost. And I will anticipate by an assertion which you will at present think too bold, but which

I am willing that you should think so, in order that you may well remember it—*the highest thing that Art can do is to set before you the true image of the presence of a noble human being. It has never done more than this, and it ought not to do less*" (*L. A.*, § 31).

This doctrine is harmonious and consistent with the teaching of *Modern Painters.* In both "fact is the starting-point," and correspondence with Nature is the End of Art; but in both the nature of the fact and the extent of the correspondence is shown to be inconsistent with vulgar illusion; not because illusion is "wrong," but because real Art appeals to the imagination, and can only appeal *by* the imagination; it appeals to the intellect, and can only appeal *by* the intellect. To do this it must select its material. If it were possible to give the whole truth of Nature, and nothing but the truth, it were well and good; but that is not possible: and such Art as Dante dreamed about is still a superhuman ideal; —Photography at any rate does not yet promise us its possession.

25. *The Most Important Truths.*—The End of Art is therefore to produce something that represents Nature; in the terms of *Modern Painters*, to tell Truth. But as it cannot tell all the Truths at once, it becomes necessary to discover which are most valuable as worthily expressing the subject. "As soon as the artist forgets his function of praise in that of imitation, his art is lost. His business is to give, by any means, however imperfect, the idea of a beautiful thing; not, by any

means, however perfect, the realisation of an ugly one" (*L. F.*, § 4, note). "This is the main lesson I have been teaching," says Mr. Ruskin in 1877, "so far as I have been able, through my whole life,—only that picture is noble which is painted in love of the reality. It is a law which embraces the highest scope of Art; it is one also which guides in security the first steps of it. If you desire to draw that you may represent something you care for, you will advance swiftly and safely. If you desire to draw that you may make a beautiful drawing you will never make one. And this simplicity of purpose is farther useful in closing all discussions of the respective grace or admirableness of method. The best painting is that which most completely represents what it undertakes to represent, as the best language is that which most clearly says what it undertakes to say" (*L. F.*, §§ 7, 8).

Now compare this passage with the beginning of *Modern Painters*, part ii., section 1: "The landscape painter must always have two great and distinct ends: the first, to induce in the spectator's mind the faithful conception of any natural objects whatsoever; the second, to guide the spectator's mind to those objects most worthy of its contemplation, and to inform him of the thoughts and feelings with which these were regarded by the artist himself." Here we find the young author struggling with the difficulty which he resolves so easily and fearlessly after another thirty years of study. We see that he takes the same standpoint between objective and subjective art—if for once

I may be allowed the use of these convenient terms. He refuses one of the "distinct ends," that of mere imitation, and accepts the other, which at first confusedly, but with increasing clearness, he resolves to call Praise. The wording of the early part of *Modern Painters*, leaning more on the "thoughts" than the "feelings" of the artist, is inadequate, and leads to a nominal confusion of Art with Science. But the drift of idea is distinctly in the direction of his later doctrine: that Great Art expresses the love or emotion or admiration of the artist in his choice of facts; "that the truth of Nature is a part of the truth of God" (*M. P.*, vol. i. p. 49); that the most important Truths are those which tell the secret of Beauty.

It was only confusedly that he put out this principle at first; and the attempt to combine it with the doctrines of Reynolds vitiates these early chapters of *Modern Painters*. That is why, among other reasons, the author for a long time declined to reprint his book; and why it must be read with caution by the student, who ought to ground himself in the *Oxford Lectures* and *Laws of Fésole* if he wants to understand Mr. Ruskin's Art-Teaching in its fully-developed form. But though there is confusion in the early work it is only the mystery of the dawn; it is not contradiction of later teaching. His "changes of doctrine," he says in a letter printed in *Igdrasil* (vol. i. No. 9), "have been merely whether students should draw on gray paper or white, and the like," that is to say, only in the practical details of work: these matters of principle are consistently developed.

And here we find that from the beginning he has regarded the most important Truths as those which express the artist's admiration and love of his subject. In the next chapter we will inquire farther into them.

26. *Selection.*—Meanwhile you may recall his famous advice to students to "go to Nature, rejecting nothing, selecting nothing, and scorning nothing" (*M. P.*, vol. i. p. 417). That advice was given in 1843, before the Pre-Raphaelite schism; in reaction from the affectation of exclusiveness, from the spurious taste which rejected all Nature and Art that did not square with the stiff framework of rules and precepts. That advice, too, was given to students, not to artists; not with respect to picture-making, but to open their eyes to Nature, and to train their hands in a fuller and freer school than the dusty gallery of antiques; and it was accompanied by careful limitation of "Nature" to perfectly free and noble Nature—the woodland, not the park; the mountain tarn, not the Round Pond—to a realm where there is little to eliminate as unpaintable. And for study as opposed to picture-making, the range of choice is very wide—"Anything will do for study" (*Acad. Notes*). To the beginner who wants to draw the Etruscan vase at Naples he answers (*L. F.*, Aph. xx.), quite in the same spirit—"In the meantime, the housemaid has broken a kitchen teacup; let me see if you can draw one of the pieces."

And farther, this is not quite the same kind of selection as that which constitutes the appeal to the imagination—as that which is guided by

admiration, sympathy, and love. The selection of important Truths in a given object is made on other grounds from selection of the object. It is possible to draw the potsherd in mere attempt to give the force of its relief against the background, appealing solely to the senses; or, again, you may find its curves and subtle modelling grow upon you, as something entirely admirable and worthy of your powers; its opalescent colour and the delicacy of its gradations may give you, in their small way, real ground for admiration. And there would be all the difference between a drawing made in the spirit of pride—disdaining the object except as an occasion for display of execution or illusion—and a drawing made in the spirit of love, finding the latent beauty of little things. It is not the choice of object merely, but the choice of subject—the imaginative vision of the facts about the object seized as paintable—that is the true selection; "what Art undertakes to represent."

27. *Idealism and Realism.*—The slang of connoisseurs classes together a whole catalogue of painters, whose work has little in common, as "Idealists"; and a group of others as "Realists," though their temper, subject, style, and character may be entirely dissimilar. The Idealists, people think, are those who paint what they do not see; the Realists are those who paint what they do see. This distinction is carried out even in different works by the same artist, who may make at one time a portrait in the Realistic style, and then a "fancy head" in the Idealistic. It seems a very reasonable and comprehensible distinction; and it

is one of the difficult points in Ruskin's Art-writing that he does not recognise the commonly accepted view. He does not admit that "Great" Art paints what it does not see; the mere fact of deliberate and studied putting-together of fictitious material is regarded by him as a sign of Sham Art, and he claims that the really imaginative painters do "see" their subject, and even in their wilder flights are Realists, in striving to represent it as fully as possible. On the other hand, the imagination enters into all vital Art; for the mere choice and arrangement of the subject; the selection of those parts of it, and truths about it, which the artist means to convey; and the expression of feeling, however unintentional, which is necessarily betrayed in every sincerely and powerfully wrought work, are all Ideal elements from which the sternest Realism cannot escape. So that in the sort of Art which Ruskin allows to be worth study, this common distinction does, from his point of view, disappear. We have, therefore, to ask what notions he attaches to the words Ideal and Real; how far Art can express reality—the inquiry to which we now proceed.

# CHAPTER IV

## GENERALISATION

28. *The Theory of Generalisation.*—Fifty years ago all teachers of drawing told their pupils to generalise; and the doctrine is by no means extinct even now. By "generalising" they mean the omission of minor points of detail; of the evidences of too nice an inquiry into the nature and structure of things represented; and of individual character, subtly observed and crisply rendered, in living beings. The reasons for this precept are variously given according to the sub-school to which the teacher belongs; for it is the cunning of the theory that it fits so many cases. One will reply that generalisation gives breadth, and detail cuts the picture up. Another, that it gives mystery, vagueness, and sublimity; he will tell you how much improved the landscape is by twilight; for in the dark all cats are gray. A third will uphold that generalisation is the source of beauty; for he has some glimpses of a theory that all the little distinctions which mark one person from another are derogations from perfection; according to him, differentiation is

degradation; and if the oak and the ash and the bonny ivy tree could be traced back to their common ancestor, we should find a form of vegetation far nobler than either. With this view is intimately connected the fourth, which is usually stated thus: You were asking just now which are the most important truths: great truths are more important than little ones, and the fact that trees are green in general is more important than the exact colour of any foliage in particular.

Many other instances of a similar nature can be led to prove that—given the impossibility of complete imitation of Nature—generalisation is the next best attainment. And it must be allowed that, the tendency of beginners in Art being toward hardness, crudity, and laboured realism, this precept of generalisation is an extremely convenient rule-of-thumb in drawing-classes; and in a great number of cases it is a wholesome practical corrective to the want of grasp which is natural in the earnest but timid beginner. In an inquiry like this, however, we must not remain satisfied with the convenient; we must inquire on what grounds this creed rests.

29. *The Platonic Archetype.*—Just as the commonest nursery maxims of morals and religion can be traced back to far distant sources in philosophy, so these precepts in Art are historically affiliated to the metaphysic of a bygone age. Generalisation implies the contradiction between the parts and the whole, individuals and genus. The Art student considers, and no doubt in early times considered, the parts of his work as natural

enemies of the whole, from whatever point of view regarded; and the first step out of barbarism in history, and out of childhood in life, is to become conscious of this antithesis, and to seek means for resolving it. To effect this process in general philosophy was the work of Plato, who showed —as none had shown before—the relation of the Many to the One. In a word, the separate tumultuous impressions of the senses (the detail) are docketed, so to speak, and pigeon-holed by thought or general conceptions, which tie up in bundles or classes such facts as have some common similar properties, to the neglect of little differences, which may be supposed not to count. The docket on each bundle (to follow out the rough analogy) is an abstract of the common terms of all the items, an abstract made by thought—imaginative therefore—seen in the mind's eye, and called by Plato the Idea.

And when he comes to give a more or less parabolic or mythic account of the way the world was made by Eternal Wisdom or Thought, in the Timæus, he suggests that the various classes of things are produced on the pattern of their normal Idea; and that is the reason why our minds are able to replace individuals in their classes, and reconstitute their generic or general ideas. It seems obvious that on this account of creation the Ideas, according to which things are made, are perfect; and if things are imperfect it must be because they do not faithfully bear the impress of the primal Idea, which may be likened to the type or die from which coins are struck; and the

coins, battered and bent by daily wear and tear, illustrate the way in which the individual things and beings of this world fail of a full resemblance to their Archetypes, or original Ideas in the other world.

30. *The Academic Art-Philosophy.*—At the Renaissance, the Platonic Philosophy (as it was understood, and more especially as given in this Dialogue of the Timæus) was worked into the scheme of Christian Theology. The notion that the Creator formed the individual things and beings of this world upon heavenly patterns, seemed to tally with the Mosaic dictum that they were very good; and with the Pauline doctrine of sin entering, and death with sin. The Renaissance Art-philosophers, calling themselves "Academic," after the Academeia at Athens, where Plato taught, found in this doctrine of Archetypes and Ideas an interesting solution of the puzzle presented by the action of the Imagination in Art. It seemed to them that the business of Art was not to imitate these battered and broken ectypes, or copies of the Immortal; but to find and reconstruct the ideal form, both in men, in animals, and things called inanimate. The function of the imagination was to sort impressions into genera or classes, to select their constant and common properties, which would then give a result free from all the imperfections of frailty and fallacy. It was not only that these generic Ideals would be more beautiful; they would also be more true, as containing what was eternal as opposed to the perpetual flux of sense and show. Milton, who was the poet of the

Renaissance, puts this finely in his Latin Ode on the Platonic Idea—

> " Cujus ex imagine
> Natura sollers finxit humanum genus,
> Æternus, incorruptus, æquævus polo,
> Unusque et universus, exemplar Dei—"

which Leigh Hunt loosely translates—

> " Say, who was he, the sunless shade,
> After whose pattern man was made;
> He first, the full of ages, born
> With the old, pale, polar morn,
> Sole, yet all; first visible thought,
> After which the Deity wrought?"

Michelangelo, more than any other man, was supposed to have succeeded in attaining this Ideal in figure painting and sculpture; and the Old Masters of landscape, in their generalisations of Nature, attempted a similar and parallel feat. The Grand Style, which Sir Joshua Reynolds admired and analysed in his discourses, was the kind of Art devoted to this purpose; Academies were founded to preserve the tradition in its purity, and to teach the student rules by which this "high Art" should be produced—without fail or faltering; critics assumed the position unassailable, and praised the pretentious Ideals which nobody would buy; drawing-masters picked up the phraseology, so that the words Ideal and Typical, General Truth and Generic Beauty, passed into the popular language. And, finally, the whole Academic theory was rehabilitated by Schopenhauer, as the cardinal point of idealistic pessimism.

31. *The Revolt against Academicism.*—Like so many other fallacies, this system of thought began in truth, and claimed all along to be an exposition of truth. With the criticism of the various Academic Schools outside the sphere of Art we can have nothing to do here. It is enough to note in passing that Ruskin often follows Plato, though he does not follow the Platonists. But his admiration of Plato is a later graft upon his thought, formed long after his theories of Art were fixed on their main lines.

The Academic School was part of the universal protest of the Renaissance against Mediævalism. In opposition to the Individualist Art of the Gothic ages, it set up classical standards, or what it understood to be classical; for in the sixteenth century it was chiefly the baser sort of classic Art that was open to examination. Our present opportunities have taught us to see the Greeks and Romans as more human, more expressional, more pathetic: to the framers of the theory of generalisation, classic Art meant completeness of handicraft, absence of expressive detail, colourlessness, as of a statue newly dug up, or crudity as of the cheap kinds of wall painting executed by common workmen in a decadent period. After a while a reaction set in against these standards: it was discovered almost simultaneously that the best Greek Art was not without colour, life, expression, detail, grotesque, romance—that indeed it had many points in common with that Gothic Art, which was in reality its natural scion, more nearly related to it, both in birth and in character, than

the imperfect knowledge of Renaissance scholarship allowed.

The Gothic Revival opened up new worlds to the Art-critic; and just about the time when Ruskin began to examine into the subject in his early youth, Gothic architecture was being analysed, and the early Italian Schools of painting were attracting in some minds an interest which had until then been limited to the praise of the works of Perugino; so it was that the Academic Theory was shaken on its foundations. The "first visible Thought after which the Deity wrought," the Christian Ideal arisen once more into some kind of acceptance after the collapse of French scepticism in the Revolution, was felt to have been all this long while standing unnoticed in deserted Cathedrals, visible, not in the empty mockeries of pseudo-classical Venuses and Apollos, but in the choirs of angels, and in the Holy Mother and Child, and the marred countenance of One who had so long been nothing to them that passed by, "whose sad face on the cross sees only this after His passion of a thousand years."

With all these feelings of reversion to ancient beliefs, to Truth, as it seemed, more intimate and more lofty than any within the reach of the formalisms of the Academy, the Gothic Art took upon itself a quite new light in the minds of Ruskin and his contemporaries, who felt that the Ideal Beauty and Typical Truth of the orthodox Art creed were shams compared with the Real Beauty and vital Truth of these products of the religion which they had so long held to be alien to Art,

irreconcilable, standing aloof in cold disapproval, or choked and drowned in its siren embrace.

32. *The War of Physics and Metaphysics.*—The same process had been going on in the realm of thought, though we can but glance at its results as they touch our subject. The Academic Philosophy, in its later development and more popular phases, had degenerated into approximate generalisations. In the eighteenth century, putting aside the germs of modern thought, what was commonly called Philosophy—that is, the French *éclaircissement* and English imitation of it—was rough division and classification of materials obtained by somewhat cursory observation; and from the generalised results thus hastily assumed thought proceeded to results mainly of a negative kind—tending to scepticism—by a process of deduction.

But with the growth of physical science a new interest in detail was aroused; old classifications were swept away, and instead of assuming that Truth lay in any formulæ which might happen to fit a few commonly known cases with neat epigrammatic expression, people set to work to collect facts with a quite new reverence for particular truth,—to bind them slowly together into little groups; these little groups into greater; these greater into still more extensive classes; until in an ordered universe the whole should be apparent as a world of connected and correlated phenomena.

This was an entirely different process from the "pigeon-holing" of coequal but unrelated *genera*; and the conscious development of this new form of science has for its most obvious landmark in

England the publication of Mill's *Logic*. Now when we see how closely the theory of Art is connected with other branches of thought, we might almost anticipate, what was a fact, that in Ruskin's first writing he abandoned the generalisation-theory in Art just as his age was abandoning it in science, though he tried to keep on good terms with Reynolds's phraseology; and we note the fitness of things when we find that *Modern Painters* and Mill's *Logic* were published simultaneously in 1843—a mere coincidence, though significant, and implying no further connection of the two names.

33. *Specialisation.*—The new doctrine of both books, as bearing on this logical question, sought to rise to true universals by more thorough dealing with particulars,—finding the universal law in the particular phenomenon; a sounder formula than the "variety in unity" of the Associationists, or even the "multeity in unity" of Coleridge. But while foreshadowing this conception from the beginning (*M. P.*, vol. i. p. 64, etc.) he could not grasp it firmly until he let go Reynolds, and he could not be clear and consistent until he had given up the attempt to prove Reynolds's meaning right at the expense of his wording.

He said that it was *specific* truth, not *generic*, that constituted the Grand Style: the minor differences that mark off the individual from his species are better ignored, as being usually defects; but Idealism consists in preserving the differences that mark species from genus. This was an attempt at a middle course between generalisation

and individualistic portraiture, then thought to be incompatible with Idealism, and only possible to Dutch Realism; but even this offended the critics who thought—perhaps not without reason—that Ruskin approximated Art to science; though their grounds for attacking him seem to have been no better than the old fallacy that, in a picture an oak should not be known from an ash except by the vaguest indications. So that this doctrine of specialisation, though it does not go so far as Ruskin afterwards went, was a great advance upon previous thought (compare *The Study of Architecture*, 1865; *Old Road*, § 276).

34. *Character.*—Already, however, he gave indications of farther development. In treating of portraiture he shows how the more important characteristics of the human countenance are rarely seen, and only come out in moments of emotion; that is to say, the aim of portraiture is not to eliminate individuality, but to emphasise it; and he does not allow, like the theorists of the Grand Style, that portrait-painting is a separate and rather inferior branch of Art, outside the fold of the Grand Style.

He seems to have felt that this might lead to confusion, and goes on to explain (*M. P.*, vol. i. p. 63) that accidental violations of natural law are not to be recorded by Art, but that the artist must seek rare examples of its perfection. By *accidental violations of natural law* he seems to mean the baser characteristics of individuality, through disease and so on (as when Cromwell said, "Paint me with my warts"). By *the rare*

*examples of perfection* he means those moments when the full natural beauty of specific character is in evidence—as in a sky at sunset; or in humanity when, by a combination of circumstances, emotions are at their highest (for example, in the scene, mythical or not, at the coffin of Charles the First, when Cromwell was heard to mutter, "Cruel necessity"). This is an attempt to bridge over the breach between the old generalisation on the one hand, and on the other the modern scientific interest in the particular detail of Nature, and the ethical interest in particular dramatic situation and individual character—all of which Ruskin felt strongly, but was not able to explain at the time to readers who could not distinguish it from the vulgar Realism of the inferior Dutch School.

He concludes this first attempt at a theory of the relation of Art to Truth by stating that the most important truths are those of specific form, namely outline and "formal chiaroscuro," as he calls it in his later works—meaning light and shade as revealing the specialised structure of separate objects; and the less important truths are those of tone, colour, and imitative chiaroscuro—that is to say, light and shade as conducing to deceptive imitation. This early and incomplete theory has unfortunately been one of the most widely-accepted of Ruskin's teachings, and has blinded English Art to a juster appreciation of "values." Ruskin's wiser teaching at Oxford has hitherto been powerless to redeem this trivial error of his youth, which, though an overstatement, was a wholesome

counterstroke to the fallacy of generalisation. In *Ariadne Florentina* (App. 6) he remarks that light and shade imply an understanding of things; colour the imagination and sentiment of them. In *Laws of Fésole* he insists upon accuracy of colour and tonality, as we shall see later on, just as strongly as upon accuracy of form, and puts it before the modelling of masses. But in this earliest stage of his thought on Art he was led to lean more upon the intellectual qualities of painting, and tended to confuse it with Science, as far as the use of words and formulæ go. And that at the time was natural in the author, and necessary to the public, who did not appreciate any intellectual qualities in Art beyond the lowest forms of ingenuity.

## CHAPTER V

### TRUTH

35. *The Three Stages of Knowledge.*—After stating his view of Truth in Art as specialisation, the author of *Modern Painters* completes his first volume with a short review of natural phenomena, showing how unsatisfactory and inadequate is the Art of the earlier landscapists who generalise; and how interesting is that of the moderns, especially Turner, who give specific form. With his knowledge of geology he goes to the Alps and analyses the aspects of mountain-structure, finding that intelligent delineation of the "guiding lines" of cleavage, bedding, *débris* and upheaval had never been attempted until Art marched abreast of Science, not on the same path, but with equally awakened vision. The same analysis is given of sky, vegetation, and so on; and the book closes with a sharp attack on the critics of the old school, who failed to recognise the new world opened out to landscape, and still went on measuring the purpose of Art with the old two-foot rule of Academicism.

The critics were not slow in replying, and in

answer, the preface to the second edition of *Modern Painters* states more completely Ruskin's position, showing that he does not underestimate artistic treatment, while insisting upon accuracy of scientific observation. He shows that he by no means wishes Art to return to "Denner-like" portraiture of surface, and illustrates his meaning by a reference to three stages of mental development (*M. P.*, pref., second ed., §§ 24-29), which is so important as bearing upon our subject, that it may be dwelt upon with some detail of exposition. "In many arts and attainments, the first and last stages of progress—the infancy and the consummation—have many features in common; while the intermediate stages are wholly unlike either, and are farthest from the right. So it is in many matters of opinion. Our first and last coincide, though on different grounds; it is the middle stage which is farthest from the truth. Childhood often holds a truth with its feeble fingers which the grasp of manhood cannot retain, which it is the pride of utmost age to recover." He is thinking here of that development of knowledge at which we glanced in the last chapter—beginning with definite but disconnected impressions of sense; going on to attempts at generalisation, more or less futile and fallacious; and ending with a return to particular truth as the source of the induction by which we arrive at notions of universal law.

36. *Three Stages of Art.*—"Perhaps this is in no instance more remarkable than in the opinion we form upon the subject of detail in works of Art. Infants in judgment, we look for specific

character and complete finish; we delight in the faithful plumage of the well-known bird, in the finely-drawn leafage of the discriminated flower. As we advance in judgment we scorn such detail altogether; we look for impetuosity of execution and breadth of effect. But perfected in judgment, we return in a great measure to our early feelings, and thank Raphael for the shells upon his sacred beach, and for the delicate stamens of the herbage beside his inspired St. Catharine" (*M. P.*, pref., second ed., § 24). Here are three stages, analogous to the history of knowledge in the fact that the earliest is wanting in grasp, the second in content, while the third reunites the parts and the whole in a new power to subordinate—not to expunge—detail. For instance, consider a rock. Untaught Realism sees all cracks, mosses, and so on, and gives all indifferently in crude and hard detail, which to us looks less like a rock than a heap of cracks and tufts. Then the theory of generalisation steps in, and tries to get the main Idea of rockiness—not asking what it is that makes the thing a rock, but what makes it *look like* a rock; and establishes a rule which bids the rock seem hard, gray, angular, and so on; which results in a picture of something like a rock *in general*, but like no rock *in particular*. Finally, scientific thought asks, "By what is *all* rock, not *most* rock, characterised?" and finds that the one thing needful is crystalline structure, cleavage. And modern landscape, as exemplified in Turner, seizes on cleavage as the great characteristic of rock; and a great part of *Modern Painters* is

devoted to exhibiting how Turner found the *universal* law of cleavage in the *particular* rocks of Bolton Abbey or the Pass of Faido.

37. *The Interest of Individualisation.* — The same principle holds good in history, and for every kind of art; each runs through three stages —the singular, the general, and the universal; that is to say, the stage of childish perceptions of mere detail, the stage of youthful attempts to generalise, and the stage of patient, scientific building up of illustrations of natural law by the help of a completer knowledge and grasp and subordination of detail. The first stage is interesting and sometimes valuable, as recording, however feebly, important facts. Art always begins thus, as seen in early Accadian seals and portrait-models, in early Egyptian wooden statues, in early Greek coins and carvings, in early Italian portraiture and Realism. Hence Ruskin's interest in the early art of Greece and Italy; after Marathon Greek art, for him, begins to lose value; Italian art, for him, declines at the Renaissance, and yet his real standards of the highest reach of Art are Turner and Tintoret, apparently irreconcilable with the archaic stage. But Ruskin's later teaching is for students, who, if they are to be expected to reach the natural development of their powers, must begin at the beginning: to bid them copy Turner and Tintoret is setting them to work at the end. Turner and Tintoret began at the beginning; we must all run through the three stages ourselves, if our work is to be a living, original development; we cannot be placed as babies

upon the shoulders of giants, and immediately handle Goliath's spear. And so the wisest method for a teacher of Art-students is to carry them through the normal course; starting from close observation of detail, like the primitive masters. If they never get beyond it, they will be useful draughtsmen and recorders of valuable fact, not empty, conceited, historico-ideal daubers of canvas by the square yard. Should they rise out of the first stage into the second, it is to be hoped that the grounding they have got will suffice to carry them through; for that second stage, in historic purview, gives us little of real interest. In portraiture, what is the use, or indeed the beauty of a face, of which the nose has been lengthened by rule, and the eyes brightened *quantum sufficit?*—in genre, of supposed historic incident grouped theatrically, like Mortimer's Queen Katherine?—in landscape, of Kew Gardens, Claudified by Wilson?—or in mythic painting, of Lawrence's Satan on the Stairs of the Diploma Gallery, of which old Fuseli said, "It is a damned ting certainly, but *not* de devil"? With all their technical merits these fail to interest the heart; they fail to fix the imagination; they are empty, contentless. But the great modern painters, and the supreme masters of every school who have reached the third stage, how different are the emotions and interests they arouse! and why? Because they seek in a portrait the little characteristics which betray the great ethical laws by which their subject lives; they find in genre, whether heroic, historic, or domestic, the opportunity for

expounding and illustrating with fulness of contributory truth the typical actions and passions of humanity; and they give, in landscape, a synopsis of Nature's universal laws exemplified alike in her sublimest and most trivial phenomena.

38. *Individualisation in Poetry.*—If individualisation be so great a source of interest, as opposed to generalisation, how is it that we usually hear Poetry described as great in proportion to its vagueness? powerful, as it does not fix the imagination, but lets it wander? This kind of criticism is of a piece with the last-century theories of Art, and the last-century view of science; it is a corollary of Academicism, and flatly denied by Ruskin. He takes a well-known—and at that time generally acceptable—passage of Byron, the description of Chillon, and analyses it (*M. P.*, vol. iii. p. 8) to show that, apart from the question of Truth, it is individualisation of detail that forms the essence of interesting treatment in poetry. Not vague, immutable, disconnected generalised Ideals, but warm, conceivable, suggestive facts are the content of poetry, even in those poets, like Milton (*M. P.*, vol. ii. p. 158), who are the champions of the generalisation theory. The sympathies of men are aroused by something they can grasp, rather than by shadowy notions which elude them; their minds are ready to receive what they recognise for truths, rather than what they must refuse —at any rate till a more convenient season—as theories; and their imaginations are caught by picturesque detail, and play about the associations of it in freedom and pleasure, when they care

little to wander uncompanioned into the mist whither the Grand Style would launch them with discourteous initial impulse. Mr. Ruskin shows at length and in various instances, that poetry of acknowledged value interests by individualisation, and that the style which refuses detail and contents itself with generalities is prose. Surely this is seen in every book or newspaper; the leading article, generalising on the situation, appeals to the intellect, or is intended for that purpose; the reports of battle and murder and sudden death appeal to the imagination and touch the emotions. They are not thereby poetry, but they contain the material of poetry; "the Ring and the Book" is a police case in verse; and the harm of sensational reports is in their want of sympathetic treatment, in a cynical baldness, which appeals to the lower emotions only, and does not, like Art, mediate between the senses and the intellect. Poetry, on the one hand, presents the universal as concept, and "elevates the mind"; and on the other it presents the particular as percept, and "interests the imagination."

39. *Individualisation in Painting.* — We are now following Ruskin in the development of his views a step beyond the preface to the second edition, and leaving behind the standpoint of the first volume. By 1855, and indeed earlier, but openly and avowedly in the introductory chapters to vol. iii., he parted company with Reynolds and renounced his authority. He was not merely speculating independently and idly; he was the exponent of a movement, just as Reynolds had

been. Partly influenced by the first volume of *Modern Painters*, the Pre-Raphaelites had revolutionised Art, and carried out in every department the search after Truth (*S. V.*, vol. iii. ch. iv. § 26), which Turner exemplified in his way, and Ruskin had pointed out as the proper course of modern painting. He had not formulated the doctrine of individualisation as a quite ascertained and unassailable law of art, but he had broken down the props of the opposite creed, and brought a great mass of illustrative evidence to bear on the question. Now he proceeds to gather up the results of his own thought and the experience of the new school, to show that the End of Art is Particular Truth, individualisation in and through which the universal is illustrated. The Grandest Style of all, he thinks, would be, if possible, a perfect imitation of Nature as in a looking-glass, down to the smallest detail, reflecting every characteristic of individual objects; and this especially when the subject was noble (*M. P.*, vol. iii. chap. ii.) To this idea he was probably led by the recent discovery of photography, and the unbounded expectations raised about it. His laborious draughtsmanship of the Venetian architecture was superseded, as he thought, or, going to be superseded, by the Daguerreotype; and imitative art, such as *that* would end in, would be no despicable or trivial affair, like the deceptive imitation he criticised twelve years before. Art was now on the way to much higher reaches, which in some measure it has attained; though it is difficult to say whether the evil influence of

the cheap carte-de-visite has not fully cancelled the debt of Art to photography.

40. *Realistic Detail.*—The vulgar degradation of the Ideal in the Academic Schools was a foolish, empty nothingness, fit only for the babies' limbo. In the Naturalistic Schools, for whose present extension Ruskin is largely responsible, the vulgar degradation of the principle has led to many forms of vicious and immoral Art, or what pretends to be Art, presenting itself in the guise of Particular Truth, but really appealing only to the senses, and appealing to them as an object of desire, not of artistic love of beauty. Now that individualisation is permissible, and the old hard-and-fast rules have lost their control and sanction, any fragment of Nature, reproduced in any way, is liable to be thrust into view as a work of Art; and it becomes necessary to understand the difference between these purely sensuous particulars and the artistic unity of universal and particular which alone deserves the name of Art. They have a superficial resemblance in that both are charged with realistic detail; but one presents it as an object of desire, in which the senses rest; the other presents it as an object of thought, from which the imagination leads on to still nobler sources of pleasure. The difference can generally be known from this: that the vulgar and Sham Art tends to deceptive imagination of the type criticised above (§ 22), but that "Great" Art makes no attempt to deceive, in spite of realistic detail. The passage to read on the question is *M. P.*, vol. iii. chap. x., "On the use of pictures," which, recurring to the old question,

"What are the most important truths?" shows that the greater painters give those truths which explain and symbolise and suggest the universal laws of matter and of mind, of external nature and of human imagination, which Art can and ought to supply to the spectator if, as we have agreed, the function of the artist is to be that of an intelligent guide and interpreter to the scenes he shows; not merely that of the man at the turnstile, letting you in to see the waterfall at twopence a head. Like the latter are those artists (popular of course) who merely place the spectator before a window of bad glass, and tell him only so many truths as will suffice to suggest a rough, incomplete concept of the scene. Like the former are those who feel their duty is not done without choice of the *point of view* where *the scene tells most strongly upon the imagination*, nor without giving all *the information which the intellect requires*. Of course to do this efficiently they must be men of great calibre; but we are discussing the nature of Great Art, not devising rules for the production of commonplace and saleable pictures. Men who feel themselves incapable of painting as Turner painted, need not, in despair, join the camp of the enemy; they can devote themselves, as Turner did for years, to particularisation of the first stage, which is not without its interest and use—the faithful record of great and perishing architecture, accurate copies of decaying or not easily accessible painting and sculpture, transcripts of natural detail, or portraits of interesting scenes. Ample fields are open for this

kind of work, as Mr. Ruskin has shown in the employment of artists upon copying and painting studies for his Sheffield Museum; and the artist trained in this work will at any rate find satisfaction in his immediate results; and if he is capable of greater things, greater things will be done by him in time.

41. *Idealistic Detail.*—We have, then, "the wholesome, happy, and noble—though not the noblest—Art of simple transcript from Nature; into which, so far as our modern Pre-Raphaelitism falls, it will indeed do sacred service in ridding us of the old fallacies and componencies, but cannot itself rise above the level of simple and happy usefulness. So far as it is to be, it must add—and so far as it *is* great has already added—the great imaginative element to all its faithfulness in transcript" (*M.P.*, vol. iii. chap. x. p. 146). It is possible, then, and desirable that inventive or imaginative pictures should contain realistic detail—making the imagined subject seem actual. But while the more actual it is made the better it might be theoretically, in practice we cannot judge imaginative work simply by its realism—as some paradox-monger might deduce from a misunderstanding of the doctrine. There are many artists whose subjects are habitually not scenes but thoughts, not real bodies but abstract conceptions; and for such it is more important to make their meaning clear than to realise their dream. Such are Burne-Jones and G. F. Watts (*A. E.*, Lect. ii.), who differ from the Pre-Raphaelites in choosing to paint personifications of abstract ideas—Truth no less, nay,

even more, since myths are quintessence of Truth. Their aim is to illustrate the inner meaning of great myths, not to paint archæology, nor to realise waning beliefs; and in this kind of painting the most important truths are those which convey, by harmony of line and colour, and dignity of expressive figure-drawing, the serious and intimate character of the moral of the fable. Definite object-painting is not the purpose in Art of this kind; and although there is no reason for bad drawing or slovenly painting, still—as Art cannot give all truths equally, and indeed must select a smaller and still smaller number of truths in proportion to their importance and that significance which would be lost by the attempt to combine incompatible excellencies—in this kind the best are but shadows, and the reasons for realisation of particular detail are minimised. A certain strangeness is suggestive and provocative to the imagination; realisation, whose purpose is to compel belief, would only force the spectator into rebellion. And this is the case more than ever in the illustration of myths which have descended to the level of "märchen," or folk-lore, and do not bear vigorous analysis: the whole thing is a form of child's play—not to be despised, for we do not despise children, but to be taken on its own terms, as in the case of Ludwig Richter's fairy books, where the idealistic detail is vague with deliberate intention, meaning to suggest odd and fanciful resemblances, as in a dream.

42. *Finish.*—The question, "How far to Realise or Finish?" is another form of the question

"What are the most important Truths?" It waits for answer until the intention of the painter is determined; and no answer is possible in the form of a generalising rule. The aim of Art is not merely to turn out a highly polished article, nor always to tell the same sort of truths; sometimes the phenomena of Nature in their exemplification of natural law, and sometimes abstract thoughts in all their grotesque or fanciful associations, and whatever may lie between these purposes, not identical but closely related. Hence, Art must not stop short of giving all details which may add to the information and feed the imagination; "Finish is in completeness of the expression of ideas" (*M. P.*, vol. iii. p. 118); it is "telling more truth" (p. 128); "all true finish is added fact" (p. 125). When the additions to the first sketch are sham fact, or mere polishing and texture, the "finish" is sham finish: like the dotted trees of Hobbima, or the scribbled foregrounds of the inferior engraver, or the smooth surface of Carlo Dolce, or the apparent decision and care which veils ignorance and blunder in Claude's tree-drawing. On the other hand, absence of finish may be right in a good sketch where the truth required is expressed as well as possible in the time and under the circumstances; but is wrong when the appearance of sketchiness is induced as an excuse for want of observation, fineness of perception, patience and knowledge on the part of the artist. True, honest sketching is valuable when done by an able man; sham sketches are the condemnation of much recent Art. The greatest artists always finish, in

the true sense, as far as possible; Leonardo draws veins in the agates in his foregrounds, Titian realises the snail-shells and flowers in his broadest work, without loss of power, and with great gain to the interest of the picture on prolonged examination.

43. *Completion, Right and Wrong.*—How far then must Finish be carried? When is a work complete? In a note to *M. P.*, vol. v. p. 276, the author collects some of his statements on Finish which have appeared discordant to his critics, adding to these above quoted the praise of Giotto's campanile for its high finish (*S. L. A.*, chap. iv.), and the remark that the delightfulness of rough and imperfect work is limited to developing and unformed schools (chap. v. p. 152). Then contrasting the view of *Stones of Venice* (vol. ii. p. 170) that "no good work can be perfect, and the demand for perfection is a sign of a misunderstanding of the Ends of Art," being a symptom of decadence; but (*Ib.* p. 167) "delicate finish, up to the point possible, is always desirable from the greatest masters, and is always given by them." Bringing these antinomies together he shows that "Absolute finish [complete truth-telling] is always right; finish, inconsistent with prudence or passion, wrong. The imperative demand for finish is ruinous, because it refuses better things than finish. The stopping short of the finish, which is honourably possible to human energy, is destructive on the other side, and not in less degree. Err, of the two, on the side of completion." In another place (*M. P.*, vol. ii. p. 79) he points out the difference between indolent

impatience of labour and intellectual impatience of delay; Tintoret did not finish, because he was always anxious to have done with one piece of work and express new ideas in another. In the latest period of his teaching (*Laws of Fésole*) the subject is much cleared up, as far as advice to students can go, by the insistence on accuracy of outline and matching of toned colour, to the neglect of texture and transparency; forbidding the stippling and the slopping recommended or permitted in the *Elements of Drawing*. But this trenches on the Practice of Painting, as the critical estimate of the various periods of Art as shown in the amount of their finish does on the History. In their relation to Truth as End of Art, Finish and Completion mean the choice and extent—the quality and quantity—of additional, accessory Truth superadded to the first or central facts laid down. The quality of Truths chosen, and the quantity given, depend upon the artist's intention.

## CHAPTER VI

### SCIENCE AND ART

44. *The Difference between Art and Science.*—So far as we have hitherto gone, we have learnt that Art, viewed as a language, aims at giving the particular facts of Nature, as illustrations of universal laws, whether those under which external nature exists, or those which can be traced in the working of the artist's mind. Viewed as an activity—the broader understanding of the nature of Art into which Mr. Ruskin entered in his later writings, the terms are slightly changed, but his notion remains practically the same—Art is the skilful expression of man's rational and disciplined delight in the forms and laws of the creation (*L. F.*, chap. i. § 1).

The second definition improves upon the earlier one, in hinting at a difference between Art and Science. In Ruskin's earlier days his deep interest in geology, mineralogy, botany, meteorology, and other branches of physical science, upon all of which he wrote and published articles before entering upon anything like criticism of Art, is betrayed by the confusion naturally created

in the minds of his readers between the functions of Art, as he understood them, and those of natural science. As long as Art is looked upon simply as a language, this confusion may very plausibly be introduced by readers who do not correct the actual words of isolated passages by the carefully estimated drift of his thought as a whole.

But the difference was always clear to the author, though he could not at first express it. In the days of *Modern Painters* his mind was undergoing a strong reaction against Aristotle, chiefly on account of certain weaknesses which he felt to exist in the ethical doctrine of the Mean, and it is possible that this distrust prevented him from accepting the Greek view of Art as an activity, narrowed by Aristotle, as we remarked above, into "an imitative activity." Such a view of Art was entirely unacceptable to one whose business at the time was to combat the idea that Art meant simply the making of pictures as articles of commerce, and that the criterion of such articles was their success in deceptive imitation.

It might have been thought that he distinguished Art from Science as being concerned with Beauty and Goodness, while Science is allowed to range over knowable facts without any consideration of their nobility; but that is not the case. From the beginning Ruskin assumes the principle, which he draws out more strongly in the *Eagle's Nest*, namely, that Science as well as Art is not fulfilling its purpose in taking cognisance of what is base or of an evil tendency. It

is no doubt difficult to draw a definite line between noble objects of Science and base ones; but so it is in Art, and the mere extension of our definition to this, that Art is a language expressing Truth *in Beauty*, is quite insufficient as a distinction. When, however, we understand that Art is an activity, and accept the old Greek distinction, we can no longer confuse it with Science.

45. *Does Science help Art?*—It is almost universally believed by people who are not artists, that in order to represent things you ought to know all about them. They advise the student who wishes to draw the human figure to learn human anatomy; they advise the history painter to study archæology for fear of anachronism in his costumes and accessories, and so on. Ruskin is the only writer that I know of who has firmly held that scientific knowledge does not further the real and proper purpose of Art. He does not deny that by the help of anatomy you may make yourself a good anatomical draughtsman, only he says that anatomical draughtsmanship is not Art. He does not deny that archæology produces extremely interesting illustrations to the history of antiquity, only he maintains that such illustrations, taken on their own merits, are not necessarily artistic, and that whatever merit they may have from the point of view of Art, is in spite of their archæology, and is much thwarted and hindered by it (*L. A. P.*, § 129).

There are three reasons for this conclusion: First, as a matter of fact Great Art has been produced in many branches entirely without scientific

knowledge. It is pretty certain that Turner knew nothing of geology, and yet his rock forms are geologically accurate; that the ancient Greeks knew nothing of anatomy, yet their figure sculptures still remain the standard of figure drawing; that the old Italian masters knew nothing of botany, yet the flowers and plants of Titian and Cima are delightfully characterised. The talent of an artist is instinctive: his activity, like that of birds building nests, is, in the moment of its exercise, not reflective but intuitive (*E. N.*, § 52; *L. A.*, § 24), and the correspondence of his work with Nature—his representative faculty—is a matter of observation at the moment, or else of imaginative memory. This is Mr. Ruskin's belief as a result of his analysis of the methods of the great masters.

Secondly, as a matter of fact, Science interferes with the sincerity of Art. The golden rule is, "Draw what you see, and don't draw what you don't see." But the artist who has encumbered himself with scientific information is always tempted to draw what he does not see, yet thinks he ought to see. This is illustrated (*E. N.*, Lect. vii.) by the story of Turner refusing to insert the portholes in a man-of-war standing against the setting sun. The artist looked for the appearance of his subject as it was presented to his eye; the naval captain at his elbow could not accept a ship without portholes.

Third, as a matter of fact, scientific knowledge detracts from Beauty. In reviewing the actual history of Art it is demonstrable that those

artists who took a deep interest in anatomy usually drew ugly figures, while those who study the body from a purely artistic point of view felt the beauty of it. This is seen in comparing Dürer with Holbein, and Mantegna with Botticelli (*E. N.*, Lect. viii., and preface). Michelangelo's anatomy detracts from his divinity; Reynolds, the painter of grace, was notoriously unlearned in this branch of knowledge; and in landscape the same principle holds good.

It is also true that Science does not go far enough for Art; that the trained perceptions of an artist who knows his business see at a glance more extended and more varied facts about the aspect of things than the eyes of a scientific man, looking as he does chiefly for facts which he can correlate with already known laws of structure and causation. As an apt illustration I may be pardoned for quoting (for it is not intended as a compliment) a passage from the introduction to the *Limestone Alps of Savoy*. "All through France and Italy, where we had been drawing Gothic sculpture, Mr. Collingwood, trained in recent science of anatomical draughtsmanship, had been putting me continually in a passion by looking for insertions of this and the other tendon and gut, instead of the general effect of his figure." And, remembering Mr. Ruskin's deep interest in Science, the reader will understand that he did not formulate his views on our present subject as animated by that contempt which is born of ignorance.

46. *The Use of Science to Art.*—Why then

does the author of *Modern Painters* devote so many chapters to geology and botany? Why does *Stones of Venice* enter upon archæology and history? The answer is given in a word. Artists do not need Science, but critics do. To judge the truth of a picture you need to know all about its subject. We may say more than that. To enjoy a picture you need to understand its subject. Production and criticism are as different as simple apprehension and judgment. Art and Science treat the same matter, but from totally different points of view; like, for example, religion and philosophy. Art imitates and constructs a shadow of reality: it is the reflex of Science, which seeks to learn about that reality. And all the scientific information about the Matterhorn and Mont Blanc, clouds and trees, ancient buildings and ancient myths which Ruskin has brought together, is definitely and expressly intended to set an example to the critic of the spirit in which painters of such subjects are to be criticised. It is not to help the painters, who, if they cannot see these things for themselves, have not the first requisite of artistic capacity.

The example that Ruskin set has certainly raised the standard of criticism. No one can nowadays set up business as a critic of high class without a much more extensive stock-in-trade than the "bag of rules, a well-trussed pack," which sufficed half a century ago.

And it is a curious fact that our most accomplished landscape painter is a classical scholar who has not professionally studied Science, nor on the

other hand practised archæologic genre: and our best-known landscape etcher is a surgeon who does not, I believe, draw the figure, as one might expect. Medical students who have taken to art have rarely made other than mediocre figure painters, while on the other hand the criticism of scientific specialists is welcomed by artists, and their approval is reckoned high praise.

"It is in raising us from the first state of inactive reverie to the second of useful thought, that scientific pursuits are to be chiefly praised; but in restraining us at this second stage and checking the impulses toward higher contemplation they are to be feared or blamed. They may in certain minds be consistent with contemplation; but only by an effort: in their nature they are always adverse to it" (*M. P.*, vol. iii. p. 313). But an artist, according to his teaching, need not be a person of uncultivated mind; on the contrary, it is necessary that he should be educated, that is, that the powers of his mind should be well developed by training, though it is undesirable that in the matters of Science parallel with the Art he practises he should be learned (*S. V.*, vol. iii. chap. ii.) He must have a mind greater than the knowledge it holds; perception and sympathy overpowering information and reflection. In this as in other matters knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth. It does not however follow that a man of active mind may not employ himself upon learned pursuits as a relaxation from his Art. Botticelli wrote a commentary on Dante; other artists have practised various branches of

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literature, and some of our best-known artists of to-day you would never guess from their work to be keen students of special subjects in theology, antiquities, politics, science. This is as it should be, but in proportion as these studies obtrude themselves into Art, in that proportion the Art runs a serious risk of abdicating its proper function and purpose.

47. *History-painting and Archæology.*—One of the cases most obviously in point is that of history. It is generally supposed necessary if one desires to paint a subject from a past age that one should be able to represent the cast of countenance, costume, character, accessories and scenery which belonged to the subject. This view has been strongly furthered by Pre-Raphaelitism, and the learning and research of Mr. Holman Hunt have set an example which most artists feel bound to follow. Continental artists are quite as conscientious in their desire for archæological accuracy, and very wonderful things have been done by Tadema, Gérôme, Meissonier, Cormon, not to mention a host of others.

But these are rather proofs of the triumph of artistic skill in *tours de force*; whatever artistic interest such pictures have is wholly beside their historic interest. So far as Mr. Tadema touches the heart of the public he does it by showing, not what Pheidias or Sappho wore, but by showing that they too were human beings with feelings not very unlike ours. The greatest triumphs in this kind have been Shakespeare's Roman plays,—the work of a man who knew little Latin and less

Greek; but he knew humanity if not "the humanities," and is at his greatest when least hampered by the exigencies of historic accuracy. It is the same with Scott and other writers; and in Art these historic attempts are successful in proportion as the costume and accessories sink in importance, compared with the dramatic or mythic interest of the painter in his subject.

To most men archæology is a snare: in the first place it is impossible to be fully complete and thoroughly accurate. The works of the French School of last century and in the earlier part of this, though they were praised by the historical students of the time, entirely fail to satisfy the requirements of more extended knowledge. It is more than probable that those archæological pictures which have lately been received with applause, will in process of time be found wanting in those very qualities for which they are now praised, and will then be judged as we now judge the works of similar attempts by earlier masters,—purely for their artistic value; and will require apology for—their anachronisms! Of English attempts in this kind Mr. Holman Hunt's Finding of Christ in the Temple is perhaps the most sincere and complete; and yet, as M. Ernest Chesneau points out, it has its errors (*The English School of Painting*, p. 190). Why then does Ruskin praise the works of this artist? partly for their sincerity as strenuous attempts to realise the stories on which Christian belief has been founded. Where archæology is used as a means of realising the ideal of Faith, it is laudable to that extent; in

other cases it is right only so far as its aims are noble. For school teaching, as illustrating history, it might be largely used (*J. E.*, §§ 106-109).

In the second place, it is a matter of fact that Great Art is careless of anachronism. It was not because of ignorance that the great Renaissance painters introduced costumes and accessories which do not truly fit with their subjects; the scholars of their time were as keen as scholars are now for historic propriety; but Veronese and Raphael, though moving in a society which cultivated Ciceronian Latinity and Plato's Greek, were more desirous to expound their thought in its relation to the broad aspects and strong feelings of humanity than to dress it and trim it into an illustration of their learning.

We may say more than that. In some cases the anachronism is a source of immediate and powerful significance. The picture ascribed to Rembrandt of Christ Blessing the Children is rightly meant to touch us as an example of the eternal freshness of the idea. The artist does not expect you to cavil at the notion that his ideally draped Saviour lays His hand upon the heads of little Dutch girls and boys; he means to dissuade you from the error that it was all nothing more than a sweet story of old, an irrecoverable dream; for He is with you always, even to the end of the world. And so this picture stands or falls as a work of Art entirely on its artistic merits; literary subject and archæological science are beside the question—in this case cancelling one another. And this is what Ruskin means when

he says that if you cannot make a Madonna out of an English girl you cannot make one out of a Jewess, and other dark sayings of similar import.

48. *Perspective and Geometry.*—Although Mr. Ruskin once wrote *The Elements of Perspective* as a special treatise on the Science, he has no great faith in the value of much learning in geometry as a help to Art. Half an hour's study, he thinks, ought to put you in possession of all you practically need.

When perspective was first studied its votaries filled their pictures with exercises in its use to an extent which makes them ridiculous to our eyes. It is not likely that modern painters would parade their knowledge in so clumsy a way; but, on the other hand, some of the best draughtsmen of architecture have been singularly ignorant of the theory of perspective, like Prout; or careless of it, like Turner; who, although he was Professor of Perspective at the Academy, trusted wholly to observation and impression in his practical work.

In landscape "All the Professors of Perspective could not by perspective draw the curve of a sea-beach" (*S. V.*, vol. iii. chap. ii.) In interiors, perspective may be quite right according to rule, and yet be so ill-chosen as to appear wrong; it may abound in inaccuracies demonstrable by measurement, and yet may give the impression which satisfies the eye. And very often, when an artist trusts to measurement, and has at the same time to contend with all the complicated difficulties and subsequent processes of picture-making, he may find himself wrong in the end; whereas, if he

had trusted to observation and an accurate habit of eye, his picture would have been right.

In aërial perspective, a little learning is a still more dangerous thing. "All the rules in aërial perspective will not tell me how sharply the pines on the hilltop are drawn against the sky" (*S. V., loc. cit.*) The background of Millais's Brunswicker, painted as it really looks, was criticised by sciolists on a misunderstanding. In this department, more than in any other, what is supposed to be scientific knowledge is apt to degenerate into mere conventionality; the condition of the atmosphere and the requirements of the subject are so various that no rules suffice. The only rule of the least value is to draw what you see, with the preliminary understanding that your perceptions have been thoroughly trained by a long course of sincere study.

It may be objected that in *The Laws of Fésole* the author recurs to map drawing and geometrical exercises; but it must be remembered that he was anxious in his Oxford teaching to justify the Art School, to which he invited busy undergraduates, by showing that their studies might be directed in such a way as to become useful additions to their learning (*L. A.*, Lect. iv.) These maps are given as examples for their own sake, not in any way as means towards making pictures.

49. *Landscape and Natural Science.*—Science examines the structure, Art the aspect of things (*M. P.*, vol. iv. p. 400); both seek the truth, but truth of different kinds, and differently viewed. It is possible to make a geological diagram which shall

have some character of artistic beauty, but that is a very different thing from a picture. A geologist painting mountains must paint them either as a geologist or as an artist; nobody expects him to be both at once, except those to whom eclecticism in thought is a possible philosophy. The attempts of the Bolognese School to insert into their pictures a little of Michelangelo's drawing, with a little of Parmegiano's grace, has destroyed the value of their Art to all except connoisseurs. A work of Art is a *whole thing*, and its unity is destroyed when the artist approaches it at different times with irreconcilable intentions. But a landscape need not contain faults which are demonstrable by Science; on the contrary, truth is its starting-point. How, then, is this truth arrived at? "As an artist increases in acuteness of perception, the facts which *become* apparent and outward to him are those which bear upon the growth or make of the thing" (*M. P.*, vol. iv. p. 192). These are the most important truths, and they are revealed to sympathetic observation. The greater part of *Modern Painters* is occupied with showing how Turner, without scientific knowledge, divined these scientific truths; and the same may be said of other landscape painters.

It seems to be a fact that even those artists who have studied various forms of Science, do in their work forget or ignore what they have learned, and trust to feeling and observation. The moment learning intrudes itself, consciously, the artistic value of the work is diminished—from which it follows that the one thing needful for an artist is

not Science, but accuracy of observation,—readiness of insight. Science comes afterwards as the weapon for the critic.

50. *Draughtsmanship and Anatomy.*—There are four facts which Mr. Ruskin claims to have ascertained, telling against the intentional use of anatomy as a help to figure drawing.

In the first place, as already pointed out, anatomy interferes with the sense of beauty and the general effect. The tendency of learning is to justify ugliness; to set the less important truth of structure above the more important truth of the relation of the figure to its surroundings, and it generally results in hard modelling of muscles and wiry lines of contour.

In the next place, the habit of mind which concerns itself with forms observed in death is antagonistic to the temper of an artist, whose aim is to paint life. Expression is a more important truth than structure.

Thirdly, Art based on anatomy soon exhausts itself (*L. F.*, chap. i. § 4, note). It degenerates into posture-making, and the figure is looked upon as a vehicle for display of Science, and not as the means for exhibiting a poetical idea.

Finally, though an artist may have known something of the Science, he paints best when he forgets it; and those periods when Art began definitely to decline, are those periods when anatomy was studied as an end in itself (*S. V.*, vol. iii. chap. ii.) Scientific knowledge is useful to tell the reasons of shapes and structures, but it is not that which Art requires; the artist needs imaginative

grasp of their expression (*L. A*, § 42). Sometimes (that is to say, in Nature) the anatomy (the structure) is delightful, but it ought to be neither studiously concealed nor studiously displayed (read *M. P.*, vol. ii. sec. 1, chap. xiv.)

On this question Ruskin's teaching has been consistent throughout, but has gathered strength and sometimes vehemence in his later years. I believe that, putting theoretical questions aside, there are few eminent artists who would not more or less admit that anatomy has been of very little practical use in comparison with experience, and observation of the figure entirely from without. Like many other old-fashioned beliefs in education, the theory that students should learn anatomy is kept alive by the feeling that the younger generation ought to be put through the same discipline which has formed, or distorted, the preceding age. The question is not whether anatomy is or is not an interesting and valuable *science*; Ruskin simply points out that artists have to unlearn it, at the peril of losing the higher qualities of their *Art*.

In animal painting he would have students "like better to look at a bird than shoot it" (*L. A.*, § 23). Biographies of plants and animals are what artists should study rather than dissections (*L. A.*, § 107). "When we dissect we substitute in our thoughts the neatness of mechanical contrivance for the pleasure of the animal. The moment we reduce enjoyment to ingenuity, and volition to leverage, that instant all sense of beauty ceases" (*M. P.*, vol. ii. p. 91).

51. *The Nude.*—With the study of anatomy

is connected that of the nude, which Mr. Ruskin regards as part of the interior structure of the figure as seen draped; and, in the great majority of subjects, not part of the external aspect of the figure any more than the geology of a mountain, which, from an artist's point of view, is always seen clothed with snow or turf or trees (*E. N.*, Lect. viii.) As a subject of study, however, it is absolutely necessary; he does not ask artists to refrain from it in the sense in which he teaches that the interior anatomy of the figure is unnecessary and misleading (*A. F.*, p. 257). He points out that the drawing of nude figures, and the subsequent clothing of them with drapery arranged on the lay figure is a fallacy, and holds that drapery ought to be studied from the living model; and this, when motion is to be expressed, must be done with rapid sketches in the same way in which waves, or other moving objects, are studied. It is not enough guarantee of the correctness of the final result to begin with a well-drawn nude body, and cover it with ideal and impossible, that is to say, not observed, drapery.

But if the nude is necessary for study, to what extent ought it to be admitted as a subject of Art? He considers that it should be shown only as much as in daily life, and that for two reasons. In the first place, the nude is not necessarily beautiful. It is only as a vehicle of high emotional feeling or abstract thought that the human body as such is a beautiful object; it can become ugly—*corruptio optimi pessima*—when treated with coarse realism or debasing associations. Some of

Dürer's engravings and Mulready's studies are examples of the nude divested of all claims upon the imagination as a beautiful object.

In the second place, because scientific knowledge is useless as compared with ethical habit (*L. A.*, § 42), it is better to be right minded than well informed. An artist may not mean to be sensual, and yet he may be the cause of sensuality in the spectator. The great part of pictures of the nude do practically appeal, in a great number of those who see them, to lower instincts (*E. N.*, Lect. viii.) Even Schopenhauer has pointed out that such works appeal to what he calls the will to live, as opposed to the understanding, the higher faculties which it is the mission of Art to feed and develop at the expense of animal instincts.

It is commonly replied that in Greek Art the nude was used as means of high religious teaching. That was the case only when it was treated severely and in the earlier period; but as Ruskin acutely remarks, "In the well-known examples of classical Art, the nude was by no means used with a consistently high moral intent" (*E. N.*, Lect. viii.) It is said that the Greeks were familiar with the naked human figure in the Gymnasia, though they were not more accustomed to it in daily life than we are; but no student of antiquity can fail to remember that it was in the Gymnasia that those passions were fed and fanned which are the blot and scandal of Greek civilisation. At the present day, from the very fear and doubt with which we approach the nude, it becomes expressive of evil (*M. P.*, vol. ii. p. 123), and it can only be justified

by such severity of treatment and obvious moral purpose as very few artists attempt.

The function of the artist is therefore to be no scientist, but a seeing and feeling creature; not to think, judge, argue, know, but to see and feel (*S. V.*, vol. iii. chap. ii.), and he must learn to see the most important truths. Both Science and Art to be valuable must be true, and they must deal with what is noble; but Art more especially seeks for beauty in truth. And our next question is—In what does Beauty consist?

## CHAPTER VII

### BEAUTY

52. *Truth and Beauty.* — If we believe with Ruskin that Nature is more beautiful than Art (§ 23), it might seem that we should be safe in studying any fact of Nature that comes to hand; and, as a matter of study, any true piece of Nature, sympathetically observed, is more beautiful in some of its elements than anything that can be invented to improve upon them. But it very often happens that the beauty which strikes us in Nature lies in characteristics which Art cannot hope to reproduce—its brilliance of tone, its movement, its delicacy of detail, its strength of effect, and so on. The business of the artist is to choose those truths which he can render as beautiful, and to abstract them on the one hand from beauties which he cannot represent, and from ugliness which he will not.

That "Beauty is Truth, Truth Beauty," as Keats says in one of his sonnets, is a fallacy connected with the academic theory of the ideal. Reynolds and his school taught that Beauty was the attribute of the Platonic archetype. The Divine Idea was, they said, not only in a higher sense true,

but also more beautiful than the ordinary facts of Nature; and this Ideal Beauty they sought to arrive at by the process of generalisation. Their doctrine of Beauty stands or falls with their doctrine of Truth, and needs no further discussion.

But Art critics of the other school, catching at the formula "Truth is Beauty," based upon it an argument for imitation; for, they said, if Nature is beautiful, the more like the picture is (the more deceptively imitative) the more beautiful it will be. A very transparent sophism, which hardly needs the denial Ruskin has often given to it (*M. P.*, vol. ii. sec. 1, chap. iv.; vol. iii. p. 33).

53. *Erroneous Opinions on Beauty.*—Theorists more or less directly influenced by the sceptical materialistic school of last century, called in France the *éclaircissement*, tried to "account" for Beauty, as they did for everything else, by referring it to use, custom, or association.

That Beauty is what is useful involves the degradation of it into an object of desire; a doctrine that could only be held by those who reduce all morality to selfishness, and rightly opposed by Kant, Coleridge, and Hegel. A more subtle form of this fallacy is the modern scientific idea that Beauty is the analogue of sexual attractiveness; a doctrine which Ruskin considers quite inadequate. A girl, he says, is praised because she is like a rose, not a rose because it is like a girl. Our feelings in the contemplation of artistic beauty, unless it be connected with an appeal to lower instincts (§ 51), wholly exclude the notion of its being an object of desire.

That Beauty depends on habit or custom is another eighteenth-century fallacy, and involves the question of its reality (*M. P.*, vol. iii. p. 24). Reynolds and Coleridge alike show that the barbarous customs and ideals, if such they may be called, of nations in which the feeling for Art has not been developed, have no weight in determining the question; and Ruskin contributes the remark that custom deadens sensation but confirms affection (*M. P.*, vol. ii. sec. 1, chap. iv.), and thus inures us to ugliness, but does not create Beauty, which has a reality of its own, just as Truth has, in spite of error.

The association of ideas upon which Mr. Alison tried to base the conception of Beauty is shown by Ruskin (as by Coleridge before him) to be inadequate. It certainly adds interest and enhances the Beauty of beautiful objects, but does not create it (*M. P.*, vol. ii. *ib.*)

Beauty, therefore, is not arbitrary, but a real quality, having an existence of its own apart from all other considerations, although its power is greatly enhanced by its connection with truth, use, custom, and association. In his analysis of the subject Ruskin has been anticipated in main principles by Coleridge, though he develops his doctrine very differently. The religious turn he gives to it seems to me not inseparable from the thought which underlies its exposition; but I state his teaching as he formulated it in 1845 (*M. P.*, vol. ii. sec. 1) and reinforced it in 1883 (Preface to *M. P.*, vol. ii.) His ideas in 1842, when he was writing the first volume, seem to

reach on this subject no further than those of Coleridge.

54. *Taste.*—In order to explain the attitude which he takes toward Beauty, as something other than an object of desire, something more than what Coleridge calls the agreeable, he adopts a distinction already set forth by his predecessor in poetry and philosophy. Pleasure may be received through sense-perception—in Greek Æsthesis; and as the chief of the senses in the matter of giving pleasure is that of Taste, the feelings which we experience in regarding a work of Art have been likened by the earlier theorists to the pleasure of Taste. And, consequently, by a metaphor, the faculty which perceives and delights in Beauty has been called *Taste*, *gusto*, *goût*. Those philosophers who admitted that Beauty is real and not arbitrary have imagined a faculty which they call *communis sensus*—a taste common to all, whose results are practically the same in all human beings except those whom Aristotle calls void of perception, as it were blind to Beauty. This doctrine is parallel with that which makes morality dependent upon a similar "Common Sense." And though this theory was an advance upon cruder utilitarian reasoning, the fact of the perversion of its catch-word in popular language shows how it has failed of a full explanation of the facts. "Good taste," as it is called—involving artificial refinement—is very inadequate to the forming of right judgments, and it is "adverse to the understanding of noble Art" (*M. P.*, vol. iii. p. 67).

The school to which Ruskin belongs in thought is that connected on the one hand with romanticism, and on the other with transcendentalism, originating in Germany, and spreading to England through Coleridge and Carlyle. It is difficult to trace any exact affiliation of the doctrines of *Modern Painters* to any given writings of the school; but in a general way they, and all Mr. Ruskin's thought on other matters than Art, run parallel with German thinking, in spite of his disclaimer. In this matter of Beauty he seems to have received the first hints from Coleridge, and, finding a justification of his belief in Aristotle, to have worked out his theory independently.

55. *Theoria and Æsthesis.*—He refuses to accept sense-perception as sufficient to account for the facts. Taste implies desire, which is absent, and fails to embrace the association of ideas, which, though insufficient in itself as an explanation, is an important element in our attitude towards Beauty. Nor is it a purely intellectual process, which would bring Art too dangerously near science for clearness of distinction. He therefore uses the term "Theoria" or contemplation, adopted from Aristotle (from whom Hegel also adopted it), to express the "faculty of the soul" with which we regard Beauty.

The pleasures of sense, Æsthesis, are open to intemperance; they are also arbitrary; they involve the fallacies that Beauty is the result of use and custom; but the pleasures of intellect are universal, and involve reality in their object. In popular language they are called the higher

pleasures—namely, those involving joy, admiration, and gratitude. We are right in saying that we *ought* to prefer such; we can train ourselves to use our higher faculties, and thus the perception of Beauty comes within the sphere of morality. Hence he calls "Theoria" (that is, this higher contemplation) a moral faculty, and it takes a place between sense-perception and intellect, embracing both, but resting wholly on neither.

Nature, as Coleridge says in his essay "on Poetry or Art," is to a religious observer the Art of God, and human Art is a mean between thought and things. This position Ruskin adopts, and consequently makes no such distinction as that drawn by Hegel between Beauty in Nature and in Art. Theoria is just as much the grateful and reverent contemplation of God's Art as it is of man's Art; all the more so because Ruskin regards the human artist as only a tool in God's hands, though it may be an unwilling instrument, or an unwitting one. Theoria is the admiration with which we behold phenomena in their relation to natural law. And I think that, although he rightly discriminates our appreciation of the Beauty of a flower from that of a mathematical demonstration, still the latter may be regarded as a sort of confused Theoria.

In his preface of 1883 to *M. P.*, vol. ii., he leans strongly upon the religious terms in which these doctrines were stated. Our first condition of delight, he says, "in the contemplation of any visible thing, or in the conception of an invisible one," rests on the idea of a Personal Deity, and in the

security of our relations to him—on our Righteousness and Faith, as Christianity puts it; or on Righteousness, Honour, and Piety, as enlightened Paganism said. "For only in this state of mind can we see that anything is good in the sense that its Creator pronounced it so."

And Theoria, unlike Æsthesis, is especially the prerogative of human nature as distinct from that of animals; for, as Aristotle said, "Perfect happiness is some sort of energy of contemplation (Theoria), for all the life of the gods is therein glad and that of men glad in the degree in which some likeness to the gods in this energy belongs to them. For none other of living creatures (but men only) can be happy, since in no way can they have any part in contemplation" (*Ethics*, bk. x. chap. viii.)

The subject is again discussed in *Love's Meinie*, Lecture iii., where, as in the preface already quoted, he speaks very strongly against the degradation of Art into "Æstheticism," that modern school which panders to personal ease, voluptuousness, and the gratification of the senses. This view no doubt is the result of the increased popular interest in Art brought about to a great extent by Ruskin's own work; but he is as little responsible for it, or for any other morbid or sentimental turn which his teachings have received at the hands of foolish followers, as any other great leader and innovator is responsible for the heresies and extravagances which pretend to take their origin in his teaching. And while Ruskin goes heartily with every attempt to adorn and elevate life, and claims for sentiment a place side

by side with utility in the broad view of things as they are, it is only a very partial view of his teaching which labels him with sentimentalism and æstheticism.

56. *Typical Beauty.* — The manifestation of Divine attributes, or universal laws in phenomena, is therefore the subject-matter of Theoria; and Ruskin proceeds (*M. P.*, vol. ii. sec. 1, chap. v.) to collect a few examples of the working of his theory. They are not given as a complete analysis of the nature of Beauty, but only as illustrations of certain cases.

(1) *Infinity*, as Type of Divine Incomprehensibility. This is in the first place the source of sublimity, as before noticed (§ 16). In the second place it is the source of Beauty seen in curvature, gradation, and so on. A finite curve is less beautiful than an infinite one, and there are few natural objects whose beauty cannot be shown on analysis to consist in the fact that they are bounded by infinite curves (*M. P.*, vol. iv. pp. 197, 270, *seqq.*) The beauty of light and colour is expressed in gradation, which is to them what curvature is to line.

(2) *Unity*, as Type of Comprehensiveness, is seen in variety, in four moods: (*a*) In subjection of various forms to one common impulse, as in the drift of clouds and waves; (*b*) in origin, as in the radiating spring of leaves from one common starting-point; (*c*) in sequence of variant individuals resembling one another, but differing in minor characteristics, as in running patterns of good decorative work; (*d*) in membership, shown in

proportion, which is beautiful only when apparent and visible; constructive proportion not being in itself necessarily beautiful, but part of the inward structure of things of which anatomy takes cognisance, not Art. Although proportion seems subject to law, it is impossible to make rules for it, any more than in music,—no one set of dimensions can be taken as best, any more than one tune.

(3) *Repose*, as Type of Permanence, may be expressed both in the subject of the picture and in the object which serves as model. Under this heading might be included ideas of power (§ 16), since repose involves the sense of possible energy, and it is a mark of the highest Art manifesting difficulties overcome, terrors subdued, magnitude grasped; in which nothing is forced, confused, overcharged. He instances the Laocoon as wanting repose, and the Ilaria di Caretto of Quercia, in Lucca Cathedral, as an example of it.

(4) *Symmetry*, as Type of Justice, does not consist in an obvious equality, any more than its moral analogue is found in the "poetical justice" which always rewards virtue and punishes vice, as at the end of an old-fashioned play; but symmetry becomes more open and marked in proportion as the Art becomes more definitely religious. In domestic ornament and secular Art the symmetry is concealed, but when the decoration is that of a temple, when a picture represents a religious subject, the artist instinctively permits his symmetry to become more obvious. The hieratic arrangement, for example, of the Madonna dei Ansidei would be out of place without the

religious feeling; and when we come to representations of Heaven, the most complete and apparent symmetry seems natural and necessary to the idea, expressing as it does Divine Justice made manifest, and involving the added feelings of unity and repose. It might be added that the modern admiration of Japanese asymmetry is curiously characteristic of an age which is not the age of faith.

(5) *Purity*, as Type of Energy, is the result of the influence of light and life. Animals and plants show their vigour by the cleanness of their skin or surface, which disappears with disease or death. The living rock and living water are popular expressions to indicate purity of condition, and energy of character or origin. As a result of light, purity is seen in colour, as in clear atmosphere and sunlit sky; and the combination of life and light is seen in the purity of the hues of spring, which are by no means painful to Mr. Ruskin, as they seem to be to some modern theorists on colour.

(6) *Moderation*, as Type of Law, or rather of the restraint of law, issues in chasteness and refinement. Even in the passing fashions of mere taste, moderation is believed to express the dignity and breeding of the wearer or user of articles in which it is shown. With refinement are connected completeness and finish—that is to say, restraint upon the violence of passion, and patient continuance in well-doing. This is an important element in Beauty, both in Nature and Art. Some natural curves and colours are almost invisible to untrained

perceptions, they are so delicate, while violence of curve, strong contrasts of shadow, crude oppositions of colours, are not beautiful though they may be striking. The pictures that Ruskin praises most are not by any means those which tell strongly in an exhibition.

57. *The Theology of Beauty.*—The above are only some of the sources of Beauty. We like Nature and Art when we see God in them, however dimly; working in them and through them. The law of Nature is loveliness (*M. P.*, vol. v. p. 97), Beauty is law made visible. In a note to 1883 edition Ruskin gives the following example: "A wild rose is pretty because it has concentric petals [Unity of Origin]; because each petal is bounded by varying curves [Infinity]; because these curves are dual and symmetrically opposed [Symmetry]; because the five petals are bent into the form of a cup, which gives them gradated depth of shade [Infinity]; because the shade as well as the light is coloured with crimson and gold [Purity]; and because both the gold and the crimson are used in their most subtle degrees and tints" [Moderation].[1]

The academic Theory of beauty made it out to be the aim of the Creator in creation, not His achievement; as though, if I may say so, He did not accomplish in the present work-a-day world what He planned in the beginning. The Ruskinian theory finds Beauty in Nature as we see it —in all things, whether in growth, in maturity, or

[1] The words in brackets are mine. I desire the author's pardon or these and other liberties taken with his style.

even in decay; for many of the beauties of vegetation are in the bud and blossom rather than in the fruit, while those of mountain-form are the results of ruin ordained and beneficent. And this is surely a more accurate and a nobler view of the facts; it is the substitution of real Beauty for a mistaken Ideal; of actual for fancied perfection of each thing in its kind. It is the analogue of Christianity, as offering to each and all—in spite of shortcomings—individual ideals and hopes; just as the classical theory of Academicism was the analogue of the social religion and morals of Greece.

On the other hand, Mr. Ruskin's theory does not seem to me to stand or fall with the peculiar phase of religion which he interweaves with it—the Presbyterian Evangelicalism, whose phraseology he uses and tenets he illustrates in his early period, whenever he finds an opportunity. The theory of Art is indeed based on a Theistic philosophy, and irreconcilable with Materialism; and it is obviously a development of Christian thought—not of Jewish or Greek. But it is no more Presbyterian than Anglican, no more Protestant than Catholic, in its *thought*; only so in its language. The mere fact that he finds earthly beauty to be the analogue of heavenly glory, redeeming the world by its presence as significant of Divine energy—a thing to be delighted in, and cultivated as an end in itself (so far as anything is in this world)—this attitude alone cuts him off from popular theology; it is one of the things which are regretted by those who are glad to find

a philosopher who believes in a God and quotes the Bible; that is to say, religious natures unhappily brought up under the influence of the *éclaircissement*—sceptics themselves in their habits of thought, materialists in effect, and never able to rise to the standpoint of spiritual thinking. From such persons Ruskin is further separated by the doctrines of inspiration, which we have yet to examine; they find him a traitor to their creed and an enemy to their religion, because he holds completely what they hold only speculatively or conditionally, the immanence of God in Nature and man.

His conception of Deity is not that of any popular sect or school. His analysis of beauty and imagination is not supported, but only illustrated, by his theological analogues, although it is based upon Theistic principles, as he says plainly in the preface to the edition of 1883. He attempts first to explain why things are beautiful, by scientific analysis; secondly, to suggest reasons why beauty is desirable, by theological analogies.

58. *Vital Beauty.*—So far we have been illustrating beauty of form; it remains to speak of expression as manifest in animal life or even in the life of plants, which seem to have something of a sentient existence of their own. This is taken under three heads—Relative Vital Beauty, the Generic Ideal, and the Individual Vital Beauty of Man.

Relative Vital Beauty means, in the first place, the appearance of happiness in life; and of this the Theoria (or contemplative faculty), which

apprehends it, is akin to charity, or sympathy, an unselfish feeling; not utilitarian, for in witnessing the happiness or wellbeing of plants and animals in their free spontaneous existence, we do not necessarily consider how they may contribute to our ulterior pleasure or use. For example, we feel a natural disgust at the evidences of disease or wounds; a butcher's shop is not beautiful, however useful, or associated with thoughts of dinner, because our delight in the vital Beauty of animals finds no place there. It is destroyed also by evidences of mechanism and considerations of anatomy, because it consists in our regarding the creatures as free agents, not as machines.

In the next place, Relative Vital Beauty is shown in the appearance of moral life—that is, the fitness of the animals for their especial virtues; and of this the Theoria is praise. We always find slothfulness to be ugly, and though there may be points of typical Beauty apparent in slothful creatures, their expression always raises disgust. Of reptiles and insects the busiest are the most beautiful; and though there are features of beauty in everything that is made, those of expression are dominant in our minds in proportion as the creature we are considering is capable of it.

The Generic Ideal, as explained by Ruskin, is different from that of the Platonic theory, because it is not a mere non-existent invented standard, but actually exemplifies itself in individuals which are good of their kind. A beautiful horse or dog is more beautiful than any archetypal horse or dog that you can invent. The use of the

imagination is to recognise in the individual its fitness for its function, and this seems to differ little from the last sort of Beauty; it is the reason why, to an artist, most artificially-bred varieties are monstrosities.

In man this Generic Ideal (already so far removed from the academic meaning of the term) is further differentiated by taking into consideration the modifying influences of individual character. We say popularly that every man has his own ideals; and our interest in humanity depends very greatly on the fact that we cannot reduce all men to one standard—it depends upon our recognising a different standard for each person. And thus, to see the beauty of man we must take into consideration not merely his generalised anatomy, but the character of his soul as an individual, and as writing itself upon his features and form, modified as they are by intellect and morals. No theory of Beauty is complete which does not point out the sources of Beauty which spring from a high development of mind and lofty ethical life; and the real causes of ugliness in the human countenance are usually either pride, sensuality, fear, or cruelty, the results of which vices, whether as evidences of character or as survivals of inheritance, equally destroy the Ideal Beauty of man.

59. *Ugliness, Caricature, and the Picturesque.* —But as these vices exist in the world, and as the good and bad of it are so inextricably commingled, Art with all its powers of selection is unable to present unmixed Beauty, and it seems as though it were not desirable that it should

always do so, for that would be at the expense of Truth, and it is very questionable whether any real gain would accrue to the spectator. In the first place, Beauty is not good as the exclusive food for the mind (*M. P.*, vol. iv. p. 133). We do not find people benefited by being brought up among exclusively beautiful surroundings. In the next place, the value of Beauty is not perceived without some foil of ugliness. And in the third place, many things supposed to be ugly have some qualities of Beauty which would be utterly lost if we refused to depict them (*M. P.*, vol. iii. p. 35). The desire to exclude every form of ugliness throws us back upon sensual beauty and a limited range of fleshly art (*M. P.*, vol. iii. p. 70), or else upon a vapid and empty purism. It is the praise of the highest Art that it rises above evil and ugliness, and brings to light beauties unsuspected and goodness undiscerned by the ordinary spectator (*M. P.*, vol. v. p. 213); while it is the condemnation of the baser Renaissance School that it tries to set Beauty above Truth (*M. P.*, vol. iii. p. 260).

Great Art is praise, and only that picture is noble which is painted in love of the reality. The best is that which best represents the love. Our love is often, is necessarily, given to imperfection; and it is expressed no less by lament for the loss of Beauty than by gladness in its presence. This is the source of tragic and pensive Art (*L. F.*, chap. i. § 4).

From this we see that the End of Art is not merely the representation of Beauty, though it is the expression of our interest in it.

And this leads us to the place of caricature, which is artistic only in so far as it suggests the conception of Beauty of which it exaggerates the absence (*L. F.*, chap. i. § 5). But caricature is dangerous to Art, and a perseverance in it fatal. There are, however, many forms of noble Art which play with ugliness, not as caricature, but as the grotesque, the consideration of which properly belongs to our next chapter on Imagination; and the picturesque, which Mr. Ruskin has defined (*S. L. A.*, chap. vi. § 12) as *Parasitical Sublimity*. By this I understand him to mean the introduction of Nature's freedom and infinitude upon a work (originally) of Art; as, for example, when ivy grows upon a ruin, or ferns on a pigstye, adding to the architecture a set of features not intended by the designer, but in themselves noble; and also giving a sense of struggle with Nature, not always involving defeat and decay: as a mill in a ravine, a castle on a cliff. The infinitude of expanding emotion, the struggle for life, is the sublime element; but it was not intended by the architect, nor produced by his design, hence called Parasitical.

60. *Sublimity.*—We have noticed (§§ 16, 56) that the sublime is not a separate and distinct End of Art from the beautiful; that it arises out of one of the elements of Beauty, namely, Infinitude; and that it is only a kind of Beauty in its origin. The gradation of light which makes the evening sky luminous—which is a secret of its beauty—makes it also sublime, as emphasising the expression of infinitude. The boundless

perspective of ocean or plain, the multitudinous detail of mountain form, the "infinite" curves of springing strength in vegetation and energetic action in the human figure, are all conditions of Beauty becoming sublime by preponderance of that one element of infinity, the "type of divine incomprehensibility," the analogue of the mystery of the powers of thought and will, and the inscrutable forces of Nature. But here we enter upon questions that we have not yet the material to discuss, until we shall have heard what our author has to say upon Imagination. Well and wisely did he determine in refusing system, and in warning his readers against handbook knowledge, for all the truths of Art are many-sided, and can never be known but by experience. I can imagine his smile at this attempt to note the nature of Beauty in a chapter, and Sublimity in a paragraph.

## CHAPTER VIII

### IMAGINATION

61. *Ars est homo additus naturæ.*—In our last considerations upon the subject of Beauty we found ourselves drifting away from the *terra firma* of natural facts. We saw that not only does Art select elements of Beauty from objects which possess many other attributes, but that sometimes, for the sake of certain beauties, it is obliged to represent much that is not beautiful; and, what is still more puzzling, it seemed as though its business were not, after all, so much to express Beauty as to express the feelings that men have toward Beauty. It reads at first sight like a paradox, this doctrine that Art sometimes is forced, by the mere love of Beauty, into representing ugliness. But in order to dissolve the apparent contradiction, we must examine the process of artistic production still further.

In the first place, we must give up the idea of defining Art as the expression of Truth when Truth is beautiful, or Beauty when Beauty is true. That would, indeed, be a premature conclusion; but if it were sufficient, then the photograph of a

charming actress would fulfil all the requirements of great Art.

Why is it that photography is not ranked on equal terms with the highest flights of painting? It is because, as we said before, the function of the painter is not merely to present you with a scene, and leave you, the spectator, to find your own emotions and form your own conclusions; it is his business to stand—he cannot help standing—as an interpreter between you and Nature; and his rank and value will rise or fall in proportion as he does his work of interpretation well or neglects it.

It is impossible for Art, even in its lowest developments, in its most mechanical forms, to evade this office of interpretation. Its lowest form, perhaps, is photography, in which the choice of subject, the area of vision, the moment of action, are all at the will of the photographer. It has been said that quotation is a sort of literature, because it reveals the mind in its choice and admiration, in spite of a want of originative power. In exactly the same way photography, which is a quotation of Nature, shows more than the manipulative skill of the "artist," and is valued for the feeling and judgment displayed in selection of subject.

This absolute necessity makes itself felt still more in the humblest forms of what is usually called Realism. The painter, perhaps, has not asked himself, consciously, what are the most important truths, but he has given those which seem to him the most important, and if he is a person of very commonplace mind they will be the commonplace truths.

The stronger the artist's mind, the keener his perceptions, the livelier his associative faculty,—the higher he rises in the scale of Idealism, until at last we find artists whose mental power is such that they see in things that seem to us a yellow primrose and nothing more, or whatever trivial object they may contemplate, all manner of beauties which we had not noticed—parables of deep things, and analogies of divinity.

To Peter Bell and critics of his calibre, no doubt these visions seem absurd; and they are ready to argue from the fact that in many cases this imaginative vision is mere sham and affectation, or a delusion, to the hasty conclusion that it is so in every case. But a great deal of Mr. Ruskin's work has been spent in asserting his conviction to the contrary. His analyses of the subjects of Turner and Tintoret, and other artists whom he ranks as great and imaginative, will always fail to prove his point to readers who have not something in themselves of a corresponding power of imagination. We cannot raise these artists from the dead to ask them what they meant by their pictures; and even where we have the opportunity of making some such inquiry the results are always disappointing, because a great imaginative mind either can't or won't explain itself. It can't, in most cases, because the imagination depends for a great part of its power upon a synthetic habit of mind, and would be destroyed by self-analysis. Perhaps a dim consciousness of this fact is the real reason why it won't. I am quite ready to believe, although Mr. Ruskin says there is no

foundation for the story, that Turner did disclaim the deep meanings imputed to his pictures by the author of *Modern Painters*. The question for us is, Are the meanings there? and can the liveliest fancy discover as many and as consistent in the works of smaller men?

62. *Imagination and Truth.*—The work of the critic is to discover what a man is conscious of in what he sees (*A. F.*, p. 263). Painters like the Dutch chiaroscurists have no imagination, and not being able to get pleasure out of their thoughts, try to get it out of their sensations (*A. F.*, § 24)—that is to say, though the distinction between higher and lower forms of Idealism is only one of degree, in the lower forms all that is wanting in thought is replaced by something baser. Æsthesis takes the place of Theoria and practically dethrones it; and, similarly, in the higher forms Theoria overrides Æsthesis. In the world, it is said, there is nothing great but man, in man there is nothing great but mind; and Art is great in proportion as it bears witness to mind.

This position is drawn out in the chapter on "The Dark Mirror" (*M. P.*, vol. v. part ix.), in which the relativity of knowledge is used as an argument for proving the value of Imaginative Art. The higher our conceptions reach, the more subjective they are; our highest Ideals, those of God, are necessarily the work of imagination in its noblest form. "No man has seen God at any time; so that the same faculty which may be abused to create a lie must be used to discern a truth.

Giving this broad meaning to the word,

Imagination is the "Belief" of philosophers like Jacobi; it is the intuitive grasp of universals. In the domain of Science and Philosophy, Reason attempts to reach these altitudes. In religion and Art they are attained by Imagination, which is therefore an instrument for taking hold of truth, and it is brought into play the moment we leave the ground of sense-perception, and seek the universal in the particular. And this is at last the real point of divergence between Science and Art, for Science tries to see the particular fact under the universal law by the help of Reason; Art attempts the same end by the help of Imagination. And here, again, we find the deep distinction between Great Art and Sham Art, for in Great Art the Imagination tells the truth, in Sham Art it is a pretence and a delusion.

63. *Fancy.*—In his earlier writing Mr. Ruskin tried to make this the distinction between Imagination and Fancy; but it was merely a distinction of words, so far as the use of the term Fancy went to denote a misleading imagination; and in his 1883 preface he rightly acknowledges the error. At the same time the distinctions he draws (*M. P.*, vol. ii. part ii.) between his examples of Imaginative Truth and Fanciful Error hold good, and though the greatest men occasionally lapse from the clear sight of Truth (and all the more so because Imagination does not work by precept and rule), yet there is a broad difference between them and those whose conceptions are habitually fallacious and false. According to earlier theorists Imagination is a very simple matter; but like all

these subjects, when treated with the desire to understand them thoroughly, and not to rest satisfied with an epigrammatic description or empty formula, it appears more complicated upon further examination. Mr. Ruskin does not exhaust the subject, as he candidly confesses (*M. P.*, vol. ii. sec. 2, chap. i.), but he sketches the chief points of it in his triple division—associative, penetrative, and contemplative.

64. *Associative Imagination.*—What is usually called by ordinary artists and critics *composition*, is the arrangement of the picture; and the academic theorists, who for definition substituted epigram and for law substituted rule, seeing that this arrangement was subject more or less to laws, hastily assumed that they could formulate rules by which it could be managed in a more or less mechanical manner. Ruskin, on the other hand, denies that the great artists made use of such rules in arranging their pictures; and holds that their power of composition rests on an intuitive faculty, to themselves inexplicable, which he calls Associative Imagination. He does not deny that even among the great artists some deliberative process was at times gone through in working out their first conceptions, nor that in inferior artists this form of imagination is occasionally present. It is a matter of degree; and one of the attributes of genius is certainly an unusual power of combination, harmonious, satisfying, and complete.

Artificial composition is purely a process of deliberation; it is a slow and uncertain process; it proceeds by modifying first impressions, and

continually recurs to rules which tend to reduce the work to a likeness with other works of the same nature, ending in monotony; and it leads to the mere cumulation of picturesque material, pleasing no doubt to the uncultivated spectator, but without artistic value.

On the other hand, the imagination of genius is intuitive, swift, decisive. Second thoughts are of little use to it; rules none whatever. It may be likened to chemical combination, as contrasted with mechanical admixture, which the other process more nearly resembles.

In 1845 Ruskin believed that its characteristic action was the putting together of parts which are *incomplete* in themselves to make a living whole. In 1883 he withdrew that part of the doctrine, pointing out that it was not necessary for the parts of a great picture to be unsatisfactory when taken separately, but this modification of the doctrine does not invalidate the distinction which he rightly draws between imaginative and artificial composition.

The criterion of Associative Imagination is the appearance of absolute truth, and satisfaction in the result. A laboured arrangement is either formal or ill considered; imaginative composition has seen the whole subject at a glance, and grasps its unity.

65. *Penetrative Imagination.*—It is not only in combining simple conceptions that the Imagination is useful, but it has another office, namely, that of intuitively discerning or divining the fundamental character of the subject, or cause of

the phenomenon, which would not be attained by process of reasoning, or attained very slowly. Hence in Science and History it is rightly held that a touch of Imagination is necessary to form great theories. The discernment of genius, its power of seeing to the heart of things, is ordinarily recognised. But we often hesitate to call this by the name of Imagination, for fear of a certain taint of fallacy which clings to the term in its popular use.

In his early period Ruskin tried to distinguish true insight as Imaginative, calling all the confused and delusive play of association by the name of Fancy, but this distinction he abandoned later on as merely nominal, and in his Oxford *Lectures on Art*, shows that the same faculty may be at one time misleading and at another time the instrument by which the highest truths are discerned.

There remains, however, a true and valuable result in this,—that those universal truths which Science and Philosophy win by tedious induction are grasped in Art by the Penetrative Imagination; and that it is hopeless for the unimaginative painter to attain the same result by laborious accretions of mere external and accessory illustrative material around his subject.

66. *Contemplative Imagination.*—Simple conception or the image of things seen in the mind's eye is vague and shadowy at the best, but with a highly developed Imagination these vague conceptions can be variously joined and united to others, even to the extent of losing their identity and undergoing transformations which are, as it

were, visible metaphors. We see this often in dreams. The great artist can at will, and in his waking moments, compel such visions. An unimaginative person can by process of reasoning discover the likeness of one concept to another—the mental process which in words becomes *simile*. But the Imaginative faculty plays with its ideas in dream-like transformation scenes; and this process, put into words, is the *metaphor* of poetry.

It is not so common in the formative arts, painting and sculpture; and yet it occurs very frequently under two conditions. In the first place, in abstract Art; that is to say, where complete realism of simultaneous form and colour is not attempted, as in decorative sculpture, in ornament, and in slight line-sketching, where suggested resemblances and grotesque likenesses become possible. All this is the work of Contemplative Imagination, and is valuable so far as the suggestions point to truths associated with the subject. It is seen again wherever exaggeration is permissible, and this is the case in figure-sculpture, where limbs or features are overdrawn to emphasise character; or in painting on a miniature scale, where the points of expression are strengthened to make them visible; or again in landscape, where mountains (for example) are made taller and steeper to give the idea of altitude. Since the business of the painter is to interpret the truth, this token of his Imagination is right and justifiable so long as it expresses truth. It is very easy to discern the moment when we pass from the work of such an one to the futile and impotent

vagaries of the unimaginative painter, who tries to excite us with grimace instead of expression, and obelisks instead of mountains.

67. *Grotesque.*—In a note to *M. P.*, vol. ii., written in 1883, the author remarks that he fails so far to explain the extent to which Will has power over Imagination. He has assumed that Imagination means the *healthy*, *voluntary*, and *necessary* action of the highest powers of mind on subjects properly demanding and justifying their exertion. But there are other mental states, shown in Art, and not investigated by theorists. The first of these is that which produces the Grotesque, a subject analysed at some length in *Stones of Venice*, vol. iii. chap. iii., and continued in *M. P.*, vol. iii. chap. viii.

There are two elements usually inseparable in the Grotesque — the ludicrous and the fearful. The first is a form of *play*; and when employed by a powerful and pure mind with very little mingling of terror, it produces forms not wholly beautiful but extremely engaging, such as Ariel, Titania, and Scott's White Lady of Avenel.

The greatest men, however, use this form of imaginative sport but rarely, for their Art is serious work, and by no means mere amusement. And yet they are fond of a sort of oddness in accessories,—quaint arrangement, strange costume, which, though it does not rise into prominence as an intrusive comic element, is distinctly Grotesque. Indeed, it may be said that it is a token of power and grasp when a man can afford to play with the subordinate parts of a serious subject; and it

is usually from a want of Imagination that serious works are so ponderously serious throughout.

But there is a lower class of good artists who cannot produce lofty thought and high ideal Beauty, and yet have a healthy feeling for the ludicrous. In ancient Art, where such men were usually employed as artificers in decoration and allowed free play for their own devices, little trammelled by the architect's design, they produced the Grotesques of Gothic sculpture. In Modern Art the same place is taken by caricature. In both cases, the delightfulness of the Grotesque consists greatly in the candid imperfection which shows its origin—that abstraction of sketchy form which we noticed just now as a condition of contemplative Imagination.

There is a third class of sportive Grotesque which is connected with inordinate play, a want of seriousness, resulting from idleness and luxury. This produces the nonsense ornament of Roman Arabesque, and the ugliness and profanity abundant in those mockeries of classic or religious ideals which deform so much of Renaissance decorative Art.

The second source of Grotesque is *fear*. Human awe felt in the presence of stupendous Nature-powers and Divine incomprehensibility is an element in the sublime, in proportion as the fear is tempered with understanding of the laws of Nature and the ways of God (§ 60). But when through one cause or another the terror is predominant it issues in Grotesque. It is not given to all or to any at all times to face the great

problems and mysteries of life with such confidence as to discern in them the music of the spheres. They are either but half regarded and with partial apathy, or viewed in defiant mockery, or else revealed as a terrific dream from whose fascination there is no escape.

In the first case, when placed before the two chief sources of mortal fear,—death and sin, the artist may not be equal to the strain, but involuntarily becomes the exponent of a terror which he only partly feels and tries to evade. This state of mind does not rank with high imaginative perception: there is no grasp in it; but it leaves its impress, not perhaps easily discernible, in a weirdness of treatment, otherwise unaccounted for. And of this also there is an imitation, a Sham Art, in the unnecessary ugliness or bestiality, coldly conceived and unseasonably applied, of much Renaissance ornament.

The second state is that which produces the satirical Grotesque, the spirit of defiant mockery: base when it is the expression of cowardice and vulgarity, and noble in proportion as it rises into a militant attitude against the powers of evil, as in Dante's *Inferno*, in the *Faëry Queen*, and in many of Dürer's engravings.

The third condition, though it does not rise to the height of sublime imagination, is a step beyond the second. It is when great truths are nearly within grasp, but the mind is too weak, the understanding too narrow, and the vision too distorted, to lay firm hold upon them. Such are those dreams recorded in the Bible of Joseph and

Pharaoh, and some of the strange visions of the prophets. Grotesques of this sort occur in the Greek oracles, in Æschylus, in Dante and Shakespeare; and the same kind of struggling, almost-apprehending, dream gives its strangeness to the work of Tintoret. To formal critics and little minds such things are always an offence, but a "fine Grotesque is the expression, in a moment, by a series of symbols thrown together in bold and fearless connection, of truths which it would have taken a long time to express in any verbal way" (*M. P.*, vol. iii. p. 99).

68. *Symbolism.*—Symbolic Art, though closely allied with the Grotesque in its last-mentioned and noblest forms, is not identical with it. The difference is that the Grotesque, when striving to express a superhuman ideal, is partially incapacitated, through terror, from seeing the beauty or visible law in its subject; while Symbolic Art is truly imaginative—that is to say, it does not represent the nightmare over which the seer has no control, but the conceptions which come at his call. It differs on the one hand from the highest forms of Imaginative Art in that it confesses a limitation in the artist's powers. This limitation may arise either from want of mental grasp and insight, by which the artist is forced to use attributes explanatory of his subject instead of telling his whole story by means of beauty and dignity and expression; or else it may arise from the deficiencies of his material, which is especially the case in decorative Art. The instance given (*S. V.*, vol. iii. chap. iv.) is from the mosaics of St. Mark's,

Venice, where the most important truths characteristic of the olive-tree are noted, in spite of the impossibility of rendering any imitation of foliage.

There are, therefore, two forms of Symbolism; the one expressing abstract ideas by means of concrete attributes, as in ordinary religious subjects, the eagle of St. John, the lion of St. Mark; and the other is the use of form not accurately representative to suggest truths which Art cannot, or at that time and in those hands knows not how to represent. This is seen in landscape otherwise realistic, as in the spiky rays from the sun in some of the pictures of the Old Masters (*M. P.*, vol. i. p. 210). But in these cases there is a want of unity between the realism and the symbol; and symbolic Art is not received as satisfactory except when the whole treatment is sketchy or abstract, as in decorative Art and caricature drawings (*M. P.*, vol. iii. chap. viii.), where the suggestiveness of the rest of the design bears out the suggestiveness of the symbol. Blake's Book of Job is better in its abstract line than it would be if realised in colour; or if such things are done in colour they are best when the colour is purely decorative; as is felt in works of abstract mythology, like those of Mr. Burne-Jones. In *Aratra Pentelici*, lectures at Oxford in 1870 on Greek sculpture, the subject is discussed from another point of view. It is natural to men, Mr. Ruskin says, to make images to play with, or to worship; and early Art is the doll's play of a nation's childhood. Mere and base idolatry worships the stone fallen from Heaven, blindly and involuntarily, a form of Grotesque;

but in the childhood of a vigorous nation a step beyond this is taken—the voluntary and intentional attempt to realise its ideas, which, as we have said, is the work of imagination. And when to these mimetic and idolising instincts there is added the desire of seeing law, of grasping the universal, the capacity for Great Art is present (*A. P.*, § 41). The results of this Great Art must not be confounded with the lower forms of idolatry; they are symbolic, and intended to lead the spectator to contemplate the character and nature of gods, spirits, abstract virtues and powers, not implying the actual presence of such beings nor their actual possession of these attributes (*A. P.*, Lect. iii.) In Greece this Art culminated in Pheidias; but when the purely religious spirit was superseded by inquiry and doubt, the most imaginative minds and strongest moral characters find themselves face to face with insoluble difficulties, and fall back again upon Grotesque of the nobler type. In what is called the modern world this is shown in Holbein, Dürer, Shakespeare, Pope, Goethe (*A. P.*, Lect. ii.), so that the high imaginative and anthropomorphic ideal gives place again to the Grotesque, or to symbolism.

Symbolism by many critics is condemned as unfit subject for Art. Ruskin points out (*M. P.*, vol. iii. chap. viii.) that as a matter of fact the greatest and most popular works of Art are for the most part allegorical and symbolic; and he adds that, to the artist, this kind of work is welcome, because it permits a wide range of incident and great variety of treatment. When it is remembered that

symbolism is simply an expression of truth, and of those truths which press themselves upon the mind at the time as the most important, it must be felt that to exclude symbolism from Art would very literally resemble the play of Hamlet with the ghost left out. The injunction to "leave mysticism and symbolism" of *T. P.* (§ 40) refers to the manner in which modern decorators may revive Gothic ornament. It is not a general maxim of Art, but one of Mr. Ruskin's "texts in context."

69. *Inspiration.*—We have now reviewed four states of mind in which Art may be approached by man. The lowest is that of Peter Bell, the plain man, as he is proud to call himself, who sees and represents only the most commonplace aspects of the most concrete phenomena. The second is that of the sentimental nature, whose perceptions are warped by emotion of one kind or another, into the lower forms of Grotesque and pathetic fallacy. The third is that in which reason and emotion are balanced, imagination at command, and the universal fully recognised in the particular. The last state is that in which even this highest kind of human power quails before overwhelming and insoluble mystery (*M. P.*, vol. iii. p. 163). This is what is usually called inspiration, and it is shown in Art in the highest types of noble Grotesque. It does not follow that this last state of mind is the best and most useful for men, as it certainly is not the happiest, nor does its presence imply moral virtue, for Saul, too, was among the prophets (*M. P.*, vol. ii. p. 133). A man may be a prophet without being a saint; and the

truth of imaginative power is not invalidated by errors in the lives of great poets and painters, like Shakespeare and Turner.

In the second lecture of his introductory course at Oxford, Mr. Ruskin gives the final form to his doctrine. Imagination is the result of the influence of a common and vital, but none the less Divine spirit—a phrase which, we have noted, has a very Hegelian ring. Reiterating his earlier assertions, he says that everything men accomplish rightly is done by Divine help, but it is done under a consistent law. This law is very different from the artificial rules of any grand style; it does not tell us how to act, how to mix a little of one quality with a little of another, to put in this and to leave out that, and so to concoct great works; it simply states the circumstances under which great work is done,—the fact that spiritual life, though a gift, may be cultivated; that it shows itself in many various and unexpected ways and places; that its most valuable attainments are not involuntary, but can be summoned by the will; and that inspiration is simultaneously a result of human effort and Divine energy.

Those products of Art which we call inspired are the result of long labour and study, and of feelings common to all humanity. In the first place, the instinct of construction and melody, which men share with birds and bees; in the next place, the imaginative faculty, the power of dreaming, in its best and healthiest development, summoned by the will—in its most striking development morbid, or resulting from a weakness

of mind, and creating bad work as often as good. It is just the same power, for instance, in Dürer that produced his Knight and Death, as that which suggested others of his works which seem to be so much ugliness and insanity. The third element is the power of rational inference, and the collection of laws and forms of Beauty; and when this power balances the imagination, the greatest and healthiest works of Art are produced.

The imagination is, therefore, the same faculty, when it is used to realise falsehood and to pander to the baser idolatrous forms of religion; and when it is used to symbolise truth, of which the best in this kind are but shadows, and the worst are no worse if the imagination amend them. In setting up a claim to "inspiration" for great artists, Ruskin is not in any sense profane; it is a simple statement of the immanence of Deity in the human soul. But it is a use of language which cannot be acceptable to the popular mind, nor fit in with ordinary religious views. It is, however, in perfect harmony with philosophical thought; indeed, it is only a somewhat looser statement of the conclusions of all sincere and thoroughgoing philosophy. Let the reader once understand that Ruskin is not a preacher gone wrong, but a philosopher going right, and give himself the trouble to get at the point of view; and a great mass of petty criticism and paltry difficulty which have encumbered and obscured the subject, like morning mist around a crag, will melt into air, and leave the solid thought four-square to all the winds that blow.

## CHAPTER IX

### ART AND RELIGION

70. *The Hero as Artist.*—In his lectures on "Heroes and Hero-worship" no notice whatever is taken by Carlyle of Art, or the possibility that Art may be one of those forms of divinely ordered and wisely beneficent energy to which he gives the name of Heroism. It is said that Carlyle at one time thought of writing on Michelangelo, but abandoned the intention on finding that it would involve some knowledge of Art; and this incident curiously indicates the wide difference there is between the merely ethical philosophy of Carlyle and the much wider range of Ruskin. To understand life in all its bearings, to decipher completely all the records of the past, to diagnose the present, is hardly possible without taking into consideration the indications afforded by Art of national temper and tendency. And it is not only as a *symptom* that Art is so important; it is also to a great extent a *cause* of the health or disease of the human spirit; hence its importance to the moral philosopher.

But though Ruskin takes a wider ground than

Carlyle, his attitude and principles are much the same, and are nowhere more distinctly shown than in this theory of inspiration which we have just reviewed. It is opposed on the one hand to the ordinary religious view which would confine the spiritual life to what it calls spiritual things, truth to tradition, holiness to asceticism, and God to Heaven. It is opposed, on the other hand, to the view of sceptical enlightenment, which confines truth to empirical science, morality to self-interest, and religion to supposed dark ages of superstition. Ruskin believes in the omnipresence of Deity, and a continuity of revelation. He teaches that all good and perfect work, though achieved by man's industry, is rendered possible by the fact that man partakes of absolute spirit. And those whom we call great men are great in virtue of a higher development of their divine gifts or "talents." And so he is very impatient of those critics who pretend to explain greatness as an accidental combination of favourable circumstances, not denying such facts, but considering that they are not sufficient to account for the result. His notion of a great artist is not by any means conditioned by the price his works will fetch, or the influence he may be shown to have had upon his public. He looks into the work of any man for those three qualities which, united, create great Art—Intellectual capacity, which contributes Truth; the love of Law, which is a condition of Beauty; and Reverence, which leads Imagination aright. When these three powers are found in high development the artist is a great

man, and stands on a level with the heroes of the earth.

To Mr. Ruskin Turner was a hero in the sense in which Cromwell and Napoleon were heroes to Carlyle—as a man with a mission, with greater powers than ordinary mortals; not quite ordinarily sane, but more than others sincere with his work; not quite what is called moral or religious, but showing a higher standard of capacity for morality and religion than the petty natures who lead puny lives, and die the death of the respectable.

71. *Genius and Talent.*—Etymologically the Genius is the daimon or indwelling spirit which is not man, and yet identifies itself with him, and gives him some portion of divine power and nature. Reynolds and his school made it out to be merely a greater brain-power; the public in general holds it to be a form of insanity—an unconscious and uncontrollable capacity for doing that which the normal man cannot do, and does not want to do. Ruskin considers it as the manifestation of Deity working through Inspiration, as we have seen; not quite out of the range of human control, for the spiritual life which is produced by it needs, as a co-ordinate factor, human effort and persistent will for good. It need not always result in great things, or even in good things; it is liable to every form of neglect and abuse; but it is just as really and truly divine in all ages and in all persons, and attainable, in some form and power, by all.

Talent is the special gift for certain limited work—a gift of God, to be developed by man

on the analogy of the parable in the Gospels, whence its name. When genius and talent coincide with high moral conditions, the great artist appears.

In *Modern Painters*, vol. iii. chap. iii., the author gives four tokens by which we may discern this greatness, of which, and other means of criticism, we must treat, later on, under their proper heading. But the conclusion there obtained is that "the sum of all these powers is the sum of the human soul. Hence we see why the word 'Great' is used of this Art." "Greatness in Art (as assuredly in all other things, but more distinctly in this than in most of them) is not a teachable nor gainable thing, but the expression of the mind of a God-made great man" (*M. P.*, vol. iii. pp. 42, 147). It is hardly possible for the ordinary spectator at an exhibition to apply these criteria as convenient rules-of-thumb for judging the works of Art he sees on the walls. It is hardly less difficult to apply them in the case of contemporary artists; just as we cannot measure the altitude of a mountain from one observation taken at its base. It is only from a certain distance that we see how the central peak towers above its fellows; and though these criteria may not be complete, or so clearly stated as their author would have wished in his later period, they indicate the point of view which he has always assumed, or endeavoured to assume—a point from which things appear under a very different aspect from that they present to the ordinary critic. But surely this is saying no more

than that the philosophic view of life is always different from the vulgar one.

72. *The Three Uses of Art.*—It is not surprising, then, that Ruskin's doctrine of the use of Art is as far removed from ordinary notions as his teaching about its purpose. Art as an elegant amusement, Art as an ingenious trick, Art as a form of commercial manufacture, Art as an emotional intoxicant—with all these he has nothing to do.

Its end or purpose we have seen to be the unity of Truth, Beauty, and Imagination; its use is threefold. First, as enforcing religion; second, as perfecting morality; third, in material services (*L. A.*, § 32); and these three uses must now be further considered in their separate details.

First, of Religion and its relation to Art. We have seen that all Great Art has a connection with Religion in the manner of its production; the Inspiration of it is parallel with any other form of Divine Inspiration—no matter whether its subject be obviously religious or not. A great landscape reveals Truth and Beauty through the imaginative vision of the artist, and a revelation of that kind is in its way a lesson from the story-book of Nature. But while all Great Art is thus a form of revelation, that which is especially called Religious Art deals with the conceptions given to men, or formed by them of their highest ideals —of spiritual powers; of God, and man's relation to God.

73. *Art as viewed by Religion.*—It is by no means universally accepted by religious people of

any creed that Art has a high office or function. But that is a matter which depends upon their acquaintance with its work and influence in ages different from ours. Nowadays it is quite true that Religion can do very well without Art, or thinks so, and people who have no strong imagination or love of beauty—belonging to that first class of which we spoke above, that calls itself plain—are very ready to find reasons against the connection of Art with Religion. Its theoretic parallelism they suppose to be a transcendental fallacy, and its practical affiliation they look upon as dangerous. There are many religious men who think all Art is a thing to be shunned; they represent the great sect of the Ascetics, whom we have always with us.

There is another great sect—eternally the same in temper, though varying from time to time in the catchwords and fashions it adopts—of people who are swayed by the feelings of sense, equally sincere with the former, but equally narrow—the Æsthetic sect, and by these Religion is used chiefly as means of emotion, and Art is readily adopted as the strongest provocative. Both these parties are wanting in completeness of grasp and clearness of vision. Mr. Ruskin belongs neither to the Ascetic side nor to the Æsthetic, though he has affinities with both, in virtue of which he has been claimed by both in alternation.

He began as an Evangelical Protestant, whose interest in Art was primarily for the sake of landscape, which is to the believer in Divine Creation a quasi-religious Art. Later on he was led to

appreciate the religious painters of the Middle Ages, and in the second volume of *Modern Painters* he tried to state a theory of Art of which the subject should be supplied by the Christianity of the times when there was no distinction between Protestant and Roman Catholic, and the terms of it given by the theology he knew as orthodox. Later on, discouraged by the failure of Protestantism in its dealings with social problems, he seems to have lapsed from any definite creed, and to have taken refuge in a generous morality. But before the time of his Oxford Professorship the examination of Greek Art, strange as it may seem, led him back (as I understand) to a belief in spiritual power; and the evidences of belief in others—for there is nothing more contagious than Faith—have gradually restored him to his own earlier attitude toward Christianity; not, however, to the narrow and insular dogmas of his childhood, but to a catholic religion, neither Romanist nor Protestant—none the less Christian, and none the less founded on Faith.

And so in reading what he has written upon the connection of Art with Religion, we must bear in mind the attitude in which, from time to time, he looks at his subject. In his early period the best he can say of much Religious Art is that it is beautiful and true only relatively, as expressing the sincerity and the good intentions and the saving graces of men belonging to an alien creed; but as he goes on he grows into more sympathy with them, and judges both their virtues and their defects more justly.

74. *The Influence of Religion upon Art.*—Apart from its claims to absolute truth, Religion, of whatever sort, means the love, reverence, and dread of man's conceptions of spiritual being; thus opposed to morality, which is the law of conduct (*L. A.*, § 37). When we recollect the meanings we have successively attached to Truth, Beauty, and Imagination, we cannot fail to see that the highest reach of every one of them necessarily touches Religion. The highest Truth attainable by man at any given time is what he believes to be the word of God; the highest Beauty is what he believes to be the work of God; and his highest Imaginations are of the attributes with which he invests his conception of God.

Whence it follows that Art in which these three are manifested is an index of the reach of religious attainment; an index, however, which needs very careful reading. For we must watch not only the height, so to speak, of the mercury in the barometer, but we must see whether it is going up or down, and how rapidly.

In the rise of Art Religion is its great stimulant; the Art of early nations is always an attempt to realise their highest, that is, their religious ideals. Such Art is vital and great in proportion to the vitality and greatness of the religious conceptions which influence it. The two greatest manifestations of Art that the world has seen are those which occurred during the rise of the Greek spirit out of scattered and semi-barbarous elements into its Pan-Hellenic splendour; and the parallel rise of the completed Christian spirit out of the similar

semi-barbarism of Europe in the age preceding the Renaissance, and culminating in the beginning of the sixteenth century. The peculiar spirit of Greece was humanity, and we find that the progress of Greek Art, as actuated by the aims of Greek religion, consisted in the replacing of monstrous conceptions of Deity by human ideals —by anthropomorphism. The peculiar spirit of Christianity is its comparative depreciation of humanity, the mortification of the flesh, the conscience of original sin; and we therefore find that the growth of Christian Art tends to replace anthropomorphism by symbolism borrowed from external nature as the work of God. The Bible, unlike classic authors, abounds in imagery taken from landscape and animal life (*L. A. P.*, Lect. iii.), beginning with the Garden of Eden and ending with the Apocalyptic River and Tree of Life. And all distinctively Christian Art is marked off broadly from that of other ancient religions by its perpetual recurrence to the forms of Nature; its decoration is based on the flower and the leaf, unlike the worm-twist of Teutonic Paganism and the conventional patterns of classic design. Animal life appears in fuller variety, and the human form is no longer, so to speak, the only subject of the composition, but a mere figure in the landscape; for example, the most genuine religious painters of the great Christian time are known by their steep mountain backgrounds, while those who subordinate Religion to Art in the Renaissance parade their classical feeling with architectural perspective (*M. P.*, vol. iv. chap. xx.)

It may be objected to these very broad views that Oriental Art, especially the more modern Japanese, has shown some feeling and power in representations of Nature, decoratively treated. This question Ruskin has not touched, though recent investigation has shown the debt of China and Japan to western civilisation in circumstances sometimes very surprising; and the broad distinction remains that while Greek religion raised the conception of Deity from monstrosity to humanity pure and simple, the Christian religion was the first to extend it so as to embrace all Nature, not excluding the human form; and finally to develop those schools of landscape which have been quite without parallel elsewhere. Their final development is owing to those movements which simultaneously produced Natural Science; their first beginning is in Christian Religious Art.

But it is only in the earlier and more vigorous periods that Art attempts to realise the ideals of Religion with sincerity. A time comes when belief begins to decline, leaving for the moment Art in its full development. Thrown on its own resources, it finds that the religious ideal once realised no longer offers stimulus; it must either go on repeating that ideal, or else it must seek fresh material.

75. *Religious Art.*—It is then that we get to the differentiation of Religious Art from profane. There is no such distinction in earlier times. Nowadays Gothic architecture is supposed to have a sort of sacredness, but in the Gothic age domestic architecture too was Gothic. The ornament which

to us connotes the traditions of religion was natural and universal once on a time; and the Classic Art, which ever since the Renaissance has been used to suggest the splendour and sensuality of the luxurious Roman decadence, was, in the age when it was great and vital Art, the symbolism of a religion only less pure and true than Christianity —immeasurably above the vicious and barbarous cults of outworn Egypt and degraded Phœnicia.

And so we have come to possess two sorts of Art, as we think—Religious Art, the galvanised corpse of Gothic Christianity; and profane Art, the disinterred dry bones of Greek religion, long since dead and buried. And what is called High Art has been by turns one or another of these remains, or an attempt at eclectic admixture of both.

There has in modern times been some revival of Religious Art, not without sincerity and not without a portion of its antique power, in the works of Mr. Holman Hunt and other painters of a similar temper. The success of such revivals depends only in part upon the artist; it depends far more upon the public for whom he paints. Ruskin in his moods points to the many and too obvious evidences of unbelief in the spirit of our age, which tend to make *all* Religious Art, what *most* of it is, a hypocrisy. But when we recollect the vicissitudes of history we dare not foretell the impossibility of a return of belief after an age of eclipse, though we cannot know what form it may take. Meanwhile the reception of even a few true works in the old spirit should remind us of the vitality of Religion, whether we triumph over the

downfall of what we think to be superstition, or whether we lament at the disappearance of what we trust to be Faith.

Carlyle says, in the beginning of his lectures on Heroes, that the vital fact about every man is his religion. The vital fact about Art is its religion; not the pretence it makes to illustrate any given creed, but the revelation of its ideals by what it does and leaves undone. Though mediæval beliefs have passed away, we are not without a creed whose pure religion and undefiled is not shown in stained windows to the memory of our friends, nor in ornament to make our churches pretty. It is not proved by the attempt to realise and justify old legends that we feel to be slipping from our grasp, or by the effort to reanimate a jaded fancy and effete emotion by still more vivid presentations of martyrdoms and Madonnas. Wherever the religious ideal is in advance of the artistic capacity, there Art is vital; when the reverse is the case it is vicious and decadent, and though some sporadic survival may be traced, the Religious Art of the early Christian age, as a thing of popular vitality, is gone for ever.

In what form the next manifestation of Religious Art may arise will depend entirely upon the form which religion itself takes as a generally accepted and sincerely believed popular ideal. For the present, looking at Art not merely as painting and sculpture, but in its broader aspect, as all work stating truth and adorning use, Ruskin points out, again and again in his later teaching,

that the first step, and the only step possible at present, is to realise our ideals of duty to our neighbours. Our present most emphatic belief—the religion, as Carlyle would call it, of our most sincere minds—is, in our duty to our neighbour, an extension of that humanism about which there has been so much talk, speculatively, since the Renaissance, and in which there has been not a little advance—the extension of those blessings of life which have been hitherto in the hands of the few to the suffering humanity which we are beginning to perceive around us. It is a new Revelation this, as new as that which gave the Greeks their conception of God in the human form, and the Mediævals theirs of God in His Creation. We now are beginning to recognise God in "the least of these our brethren," and our first step to a true religious art will be to feed and clothe His image, to open the door to Him that He may dwell with us; and when we have realised this ideal of Love it will be time to busy ourselves with whatever "higher" ideals, as we may call them, shall be opened out to us (*L. A.*, § 116; *A. P.*, § 30).

76. *The Service of Art to Religion.*—The common saying that "Art is the handmaid of Religion" can now be understood with due qualifications. In its early days, and wherever vital Religion exists in sufficient force to form a public, Art enforces Religion by *realising* its beliefs and by *localising* them. To get before one's eyes something that fixes one's idea of spiritual power and presence is always a help to the sincerely

believing mind. The works of great Religious Art have never been objects of worship in the sense in which the stone fallen from Heaven was worshipped by the Ephesians and the Arabians of Mecca, or even in the sense in which the poorest daub of an Icon or the coarsest tinsel-draped Madonna have been adored by Russian or Latin peasantry. In those great works the imagination has always taken a definitely symbolic form, which appeals less to the senses than to the intellect (*S. V.*, vol. ii. chap. iv.) Giorgione's great Madonna is, indeed, an attempt to realise a Religious Ideal, but as an allegory (*S. V.*, vol. iii. C.F.) It is no more offered as a fact than Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, but it states Religious Truth, as understood at the time, as Bunyan does, in a similitude.

But the moment that Reason and Faith begin to find themselves at variance, the vitality of Religion is at an end. Art, then, has a power of keeping awake and enforcing the fading belief, but in doing so it appeals only to the weak, for to all sturdy minds the picture and the dogma simultaneously become shams.

In the same way, so long as it is really accepted that God inhabits dwellings made with hands, it is right and proper to adorn them with all the seven lamps of architecture; but when that belief gives place to wider beliefs, when it is understood that the Heaven is His throne, and the earth is His footstool, and that if He has a Temple it is in the heart of the believer, then the whole ground and reason for this mediæval art of Symbolism disappears, and the great religious

works of former time, valuable as they are as memorials of the faith of our forefathers, are no longer to us what they were to them; when we imitate them it is with ineptitude, and when we "restore" them we are replacing a noble relic by something that is, from the point of view both of Religion and Art, a shallow mockery. We cannot now believe that God is in the Parish Church and not among His people, that we ought to make it pretty for Him, and at the same time leave the cottages around it in material squalor and spiritual darkness. To understand the Art of the past and to recover the spirit of the past, we must begin as the men of the past began, with sincerity and truth, or else we sink into the mere Pharisaism of modern Æsthetic Religion, upon which our nineteenth-century prophet denounces woe no less than upon the Sadduceeism of sceptical enlightenment.

77. *Religion and Artists.*—So far we have considered the relations of Religion and Art in their broad aspects, treating the individual artist as a mere involuntary supplier of a public demand, or rather exponent of public ideals. This indeed he is, though he has his own view of his own case, and is sometimes but very indirectly the mouthpiece of his age. Many men afterwards considered representative figures have been, for all they knew, solitary voices in the wilderness, "fighting for their own hand," not consciously in touch with their neighbours. It may be asked, Do the laws which apply to great movements of society at large apply also to the individual worker?

In some respects the same laws do apply; the Sham Religious Art which is produced merely by recipe, however cleverly done, must sooner or later fail to satisfy the more serious and earnest of the religious public. For example, the admirers of Doré's religious pictures are either the less sincerely religious, or the less thoughtfully critical of the public. It soon becomes evident that the illustrator of the *Contes Drolatiques*, though extremely clever and in many respects truly imaginative, gives only the most superficial and theatrical versions of sacred subjects. He is hardly an adequate exponent of deep religious feeling.

And yet it will be said that there are other artists who seem to satisfy the requirements of the religious ideal, whose lives, however, have shown that they did not experience religion in any deep manner. But such a remark involves a confusion from which Ruskin's definition of religion given above ought to guard us—the confusion between religion and morality. It is true that religion ought to lead to morality, but it is not the same thing. A man may deeply feel and magnificently realise the ideals of religion, and yet, owing to his artistic nature, be subject to moral perturbation and temptations of passion of which the plain man knows little. Byron and Burns reiterate in their letters their religious emotions, and they have grandly illustrated religious ideals in their art; but they—neither of them—were moral, and for the purposes of Art the first and most important requirement was that they should feel and see those ideals.

When, however, we find a man like Fra Angelico, who was at the same time a saint and an artist, we get a rare phenomenon; something so out of the common that we are tempted to set a higher value on his art than we ought—not for *its* sake, but for *his*. And although in his earlier period Ruskin contrasts the work of Angelico with that of profane painters and imitators, showing how, on his own ground, he is supreme, in the later period he finds that ground to be narrow. The Angelican ideal is not Art of the highest type. It is full of omissions and shortcomings, though sincere and true as far as it goes.

The greatest Art is the work of good but not distinctively religious men (*L. A.*, § 48). Living in those transition periods at the zenith of national power, when early simplicity was beginning to give way to the confusion and scepticism of decadence, they were generally men who had too much imagination to be irreligious, but too great a scope to subscribe in full sincerity to beliefs which the spirit of their time was beginning to find too narrow. Such beliefs they could sympathise with and illustrate, though they saw beyond them; and their wider range gave them an imaginative power over their subject which the more reverent and timid temper of the earlier time failed to attain.

## CHAPTER X

### ART AND MORALITY

78. *Ethical Laws and Practical Rules.*—"Good," as we commonly use the word, is a relative term; it means nothing, unless you can answer the question "Good for *what?*" Some things may be good for certain ends; but those ends may be mistaken. Now Art is not the exclusive possession of any narrow community; though varying in completion it is universal in essence. What is good for Great Art should be found good for humanity in general, as viewed from the highest standpoint of all-embracing thought. And the virtue of an artist as an artist should be the virtue of a man as a man—not as a member of some clique, or sect, or village community.

In little societies of that kind, *Rules* of conduct enjoy their highest power and honour; rules chiefly negative, hedging the average man from average error, and pointing him along the path of decency to a commonplace and not unattainable fold of "respectability"—that is what is commonly called morality. It is quite external; it demands conformity to use and custom; it shuts its eyes to

the more unpleasant facts of nature and the most pressing needs of man. It is to true Moral Philosophy what old Academicism with its foolish rules was to the Philosophy of Art.

What we want to know is the *Law* of conduct (§ 33); the natural and necessary conditions of human character and action; and these conditions are various, not only of the mind, but of the body also. All the powers and faculties are included in them; all instincts and attributes, from the highest conceptions down to the lowest appetites. Ethic is the science of human will, that is, of the whole man considered as acting.

If Art were a mere matter of craftsmanship, of dexterity, of imitation, of ingenuity, we should not need to draw Ethics so definitely into the question. That Art would be great which was clever; though, even then, cleverness is the fruit of ethical conditions; somebody must be good before anybody can be clever. But we have seen that the Art which is generally allowed to be greatest holds its place in virtue of something more than cleverness —in virtue, namely, of Imagination; and is only *great* in expressing the whole sum of human powers (§ 70)—the whole man considered as acting. It expresses Ideals, which are in Ethics, Standards; in Art, Types. Thus Art and Morality are very closely interwoven and interdependent.

The Imagination as above described is the great motive power; it brings before the man his reasons for action. For example, people are not heartless in the face of visible suffering, they are

only heartless when the object of their charity is both out of sight and out of mind. The more imagination brings the object of sympathy before the mind, the greater the charity. To all other virtues in the same manner Imagination is the leader and guide; without it Morality is low, with it Morality is high—and as the greatness of Art depends chiefly upon Imagination, the connection of Art with Morality is thus defined. (On the whole subject read *S. V.*, vol. iii. chap. iv., and *L. A.*, Lect. iii.)

79. *The Effect of Art upon the Artist.*—It is a common reproach that artists are immoral; and, judged by the standard of customary social morality, no doubt they often fall short in this, as in the ordinary requirements of religion. It is a point, however, which could only be decided by statistics; and meanwhile a very large number of artists could be pointed out, everywhere and at all times, as exemplary and respectable citizens. When you come to know a number of artists personally, you find that they do not differ in point of morals from the same number of other people. Their vices and virtues are those of their epoch; although the interest taken by the public in their personality turns upon them a fierce light which throws the shadows of their character into strong relief. There are saints and sinners in all classes; and the percentage of ordinary virtue among artists is, at a rough guess, much the same as in the world at large.

But if we ask, "What is the Morality, in its broader sense, of *great* artists? What is the sum

of their capabilities and energies?" we shall find that it must necessarily be high. The powers that are required and developed by Art are all the nobler instincts and purer (that is, less selfish) emotions and finer susceptibilities. We cannot make ourselves good by painting and singing, but we cannot paint or sing nobly unless we have the capacity for goodness. And Art tends to enhance that capacity. The love of Beauty is a good thing, an evidence of a capacity for virtue; although it may survive the loss of Morality, it cannot survive it for long. Imagination may be abused, but it is a condition of high Morality. It is impossible for a dissipated mind to exert the faculty of composition, which is the distinctive gift of the greater artists. But, as we have seen, the most striking manifestations of Art have occurred at the turning-point from severe early religion and morals to unbelief and luxury; when the other evidences of pristine power have gone, Art for a time still flourishes as the evidence of former conditions. And if this be true in the history of nations, it is true also in the history of individuals; so far as we know the lives of great artists, they have been brought up in piety and virtue, and their total capacity has been the gift partly of heredity, partly of early training. When they have given way to passion, they have died young, or painted ill when they became old. The common talk about the irregularities of genius applies merely to genius of a second-rate and abortive kind. A clear head, a keen eye, and a steady hand are the marks of genius; they can

only be gained and preserved by self-command and unremitting industry. There can be nothing more foolish than the notion which some Art students share, with all the rest of the *quartier Latin*, that excess in youth will fit them for succeeding in age.

80. *The Effect of the Artist's Morality on his Art.*—If we understand by Morality something more than observance of social rules, we cannot fail to see that it has a very strong influence on Art, as upon every other activity of human life. The two main instincts of justice (or order) and love (or sympathy), to which all other virtues may be reduced, manifest themselves in Art at every turn. The whole of Beauty depends upon the perception of law or order (§ 57). The whole capacity for Truth depends upon sympathy with Nature and man, and its accompanying insight; the most discriminative portrait-painters, like Velasquez and Reynolds, have been the sweetest and kindest of men (*T. P.*, §§ 64, 65).

When we take the various virtues of Art in detail, we find that they depend upon general virtues. Delicacy, for example, is nothing else but the evidence of a fine organisation, without which high Morality is impossible. Power is the evidence of the artist's strength, whether for prolonged or sudden exertion; like delicacy, it may be affected—the hypocrisy of Art is as practicable as the hypocrisy of ethics, but such results are as valueless. Colour can only be rightly perceived by a healthy eye; it is always a sign of morbid condition when colour becomes despised or

misconceived—colour, that is, of true and delicate quality, neither gaudy nor funereal. It is among the early religious painters that colour is carried to its highest pitch; and the disappearance of the colour faculty in artists who have once possessed it is always a sign of morbid change or unhappy circumstances. "Typical Beauty," as seen in Art, illustrates the argument.

A great artist may break some of those commandments most held in esteem by society, but he cannot be really vain or selfish; for his power of work depends upon calm of mind, and cannot be carried on in the midst of the restlessness and mean anxieties which are caused by vanity and selfishness. Again, since the highest qualities of the mind are needed to paint great pictures, Art of this kind is impossible to a shallow or petty person; and finally, since Truth and Imagination demand above all things sincerity, no false or mean man can be a great artist (*M. P.*, vol. v. p. 196). Turner was not a mean man; he exacted what was due to him, but his secret benevolence was great (*L. A. P.*, § 105).

In Morality, as in Imagination, the artist is not conscious of the laws which condition his life and work. It is not true unselfishness, true sincerity, that is produced by rule; the disposition must be there; and just as in daily life we see a man's character showing through all he does, so in Art. Personal Morality in its broad sense implies character, which no education and no resolution can wholly change or efficiently control. This doctrine is one about which Ruskin has never altered his

mind—the necessity of a high Morality for the production of great Art; a noble nature shown in that "incorruptible and earnest pride which no applause, no reprobation, can blind to its shortcomings or beguile of its hope" (*M. P.*, vol. ii. p. 3, and note of 1883). Great Art requires a mind and body perfected by heredity and practice; and is inconsistent with mean anxiety, gnawing lust, wretched spite, or remorse or bad conscience (*L. A.*, § 71).

81. *Art for Art's Sake.*—A doctrine which has been energetically preached in modern times is that Art forms a world by itself, and must be taken entirely on its own ground, cultivated for its own sake. This doctrine arises from a reaction against the notion that Art is the handmaid of Religion—a notion which we have already seen to be an error. It does not, however, follow that the contradictory of an error is by any means the whole truth, and while we freely admit that the purpose of Art is not to bolster up the Ideals of Religion nor to illustrate its precepts, we cannot but feel that the connection between Art and Religion is a historical fact. So also is the connection between Art and Morality. It is simply a matter of fact that the kind of Art which Ruskin calls great, that is to say, the early work of Greece as far as Pheidias, Florentine painting and sculpture from Giotto to Michelangelo, Venetian to Tintoret; with certain others such as Correggio, Velasquez, Vandyck, and Reynolds, and the best English landscapists—all these are the outcome, not of any trick or secret of manufacture,

but of national and individual powers identical with those which produced national and individual morality.

Another reason for the doctrine of "Art for Art's sake" is equally grounded on fact: the denial that greatness in Art depends on "literary subject," and the assertion of the importance of the handicraft element. Though Ruskin in his earlier years was less clear about this than in his later period, and his language has been misconstrued and misused by the upholders of the "literary subject" and moral mission of Art, he has always been aware of a deeper truth than those who fancied they were supporting or withstanding him. Looking at Art as a philosopher, and not as a mere critic, he has seen its broad relations with human life; and, complicated as they are, he has to a certain extent disentangled them. It would be impossible here to follow him into all the detailed analyses of signs and tokens by which Morality finds its analogue and exposition in Art; it must be enough to state the result at which he has arrived—a statement which must be kept clearly in view in reading his works—namely, that Art is the reflex and manifestation of human character, and that by its vivid appeal to the imagination it tends to fix and develop the character both of the artist and his public.

82. *Didactic Art.*—It is in this connection that he says, "All good Art is more or less didactic" (*Academy Notes*, vol. vi., 1875, p. 8, and *A. P.*, § 142). It would not be a right use of this saying if

we were to make it mean that it is the purpose or End of Art to teach definite lessons of morality or religion; it says no more than that you do learn good lessons from good Art, and bad lessons from bad Art; and that the Art from which no lessons are learnt is Sham Art. The greater part of modern Art is so derivative and confused in aim that nothing can be gathered from it except the story of the artist's irresolution and incompetence —incompetence as an intellectual and moral being, however dexterous he may have been as a painter. But while the great man is unconscious of his mission and careless of didactic purpose, the mere fact that he ranks higher than others—has keener insight and stronger sympathy, and more complete power of expression—makes him necessarily the exponent of moral law. His mere choice of subject, his omissions, his accessories, are all significant; and they become more significant when the spectator is himself well informed and observant.

But special teaching is not the purpose of Art. "It is much easier to be didactic than to be lovely" (*Academy Notes*, vol. iv., 1858, p. 14), and the exaltation of one of the qualities into the essence leads to nothing but confusion. If it were the purpose of Art to be didactic, the clumsiest woodcut in a child's "goody-book" ought to be ranked higher than Titian's Bacchus or Correggio's Venus—the pictures which Mr. Ruskin says in one place (on "The Study of Architecture," *Old Road*, vol. i.) are the last he would part with out of our National Gallery; for they are the evidence of powers

gained by ages of previous courage, continence, and religion, not intentionally didactic, but the fruit of highly developed moral capabilities.

83. *The Effect of Art on Public Morals.*—It does not follow that such pictures have a good influence on every mind. The mere fact that they are evidence of a wide range of sympathies, from high intellectual grasp to naïve physical instinct, shows that they contain qualities calculated to appeal to a wide range of perceptions. The thinker finds thought in them; the voluptuary finds piquancy in them; and, if it be only to the pure that all things are pure, it is only to the depraved that all things are immoral. It does not prove the immorality of the painter or his picture when the prurient critic detects a point for cavil in the midst of appeals to his higher nature; it suffices for the candid inquirer that those higher appeals are there.

By such appeals as these "Art perfects Morality"; it sets the ideal clearly before the mind; it fixes the standard; and the lesson so given reacts upon the public in proportion as the public has already attained the ethical condition in which it is capable of receiving the lesson. Upon a nation whose morals are degraded teaching of the highest class is thrown away; and whatever of childlike shamelessness or manly self-revelation may be mingled with the pure moral, is at once seized as material for vicious suggestion. But where general morality is high the lesson is learnt in all its nobility; the ideals of the public are found reflected in the picture, and strengthened

by the very statement of them; whoever recognises great Art is exalted by it (*L. A.*, § 33).

84. *The Effect of Public Morality on Art.*—Thus it is that the state of public Morality can be tested by the Art which is received as popular. Where nothing but trivial subjects commands attention—where comedy of the lightest or rank buffoonery is alone appreciated—you can hardly expect deep seriousness, gravity, and reverence to be the tone of public feeling. Art may, then, be a relaxation from the whirl of business or pleasure; but it is the token of recklessness and levity, with their concomitant strife and despair. Where Art tends to sensuality it is evidence of luxury; where it strives after sensationalism it argues a low sensibility in those to whom it appeals. And similarly, if we find a public honestly enjoying work which cannot be honestly enjoyed without high moral faculties, we can conclude that such a public possesses those faculties. It is not difficult to discriminate popularity from the artificial vogue of connoisseurship, though the mere production does not always prove a very wide area of appreciation. Sometimes an artist's public is very small; sometimes it is limited to himself.

But the mere fact of production proves that the ethical standard does exist in that age and nation. It may not be at once recognised in a given artist's work; but in order to form him, it must be there—possessed by the society from which he sprang. The Art-capacity is not a sudden, isolated, capriciously-bestowed gift from Heaven—inspiration though it be; it is only the

completer development of common endowments (*L. A.*, § 44) bestowed by God and utilised by man. And when we find Great Art arising in any society, whether at once accepted by that society or not, it proves that there are elements of strength and purity, of refinement and self-control, already pre-existing, however mixed with failings and follies. In that rare phenomenon, an age of sincerity and moral up-striving, the connection of Art with Ethics is obvious enough. But there are periods when it is less easy to trace; periods of comparative barbarism and periods of decadence. In the growth of national power, virtue is growing too; ideals are forming; standards are being raised; and in spite of surrounding barbarism, here and there you find a centre from which the newer and higher morality radiates. In those centres we may look for the dawn of coming Art. Again, in the decay of national power, the earlier ideals, old-fashioned purity and pristine strength, survive in sheltered spots; from whence spring artists inheriting the capacities of a past age,—the *capacities* which may be used or abused by the public for whom they work. It is not wholly in an artist's power to direct his labour; he may have a choice of possible subjects and modes of treatment, but the list from which he can choose, so to speak, is drawn up by the public, and sanctioned by its patronage with the stern command, "Do this, or starve."

And so the refined sensibility which is the fruit of ancestral self-control may be abused to produce incentives to sensuality; the faculty of penetrative

observation which is the result of long-established loyalty to truth may find itself needed for nothing but caricature; the fancy bred of thought and meditation may be spent on the foolish adornments of luxury and idleness. But the nobility and genuineness of the capacities were none the less begotten by noble and genuine habits of life to begin with. That is to say, they are distinctly an affair of Ethics; the artist's powers are determined by ethical laws; and the public demand, which those powers are used to supply, is also a product of Morality.

There is a curious analogy traced by Ruskin between the character of Decorative Art and that of nations which produce it (*T. P.*, Lect. i.), where he discusses the beautiful and interesting Oriental ornament produced by semi-barbarous, cruel, and licentious races, and seeming to contradict our law of Morality in Art. He points out that, beautiful as these conventional designs are, they do not come up to his requirements as Great Art, because they appeal only to the love of pleasure, not to the love of truth; they are one-sided developments of the artistic instinct. Whenever Art has set to work to represent Nature and sought truth first, it has shown nascent intelligence, and prophesied coming greatness; for the other good gifts and qualities have followed before long. But whenever Art has settled down into mere reproduction of conventional devices, it has been reflecting an unintellectual, indolent, pleasure-seeking state of mind,—a state not incompatible with strong vices, cruelty, tyranny, and degradation.

85. *Vulgarity.*—All Great Art is tender and true (*T. P.*, § 36), that is, it bears witness to refinement of the sensibility and soundness of the understanding. Without the first you get coarseness, sensationalism, violence, not only in subject but also in treatment; and that is a form of Vulgarity. Without the second you get affectation, make-believe, one-sided and weak regard for appearances; and that is also a form of Vulgarity.

The reverse of Vulgarity, whatever we may call it, means something that conventional precepts of Morality cannot give; it means high development of the whole man considered as acting,—good breeding in its true sense. This leads to refinement of perceptions and ready sympathy—the opposite of that vulgar coarseness which can be roused to feeling only by the strongest appeals; and that imitates the reserve of refinement by precepts of self-command. It leads also to real candour, to habitual justice, a disposition to see and acknowledge the truth, as opposed to low cunning, the habit of overreaching, and the enjoyment of successful deceit; or to the attempt to seem what you are not, by pretending to a superiority which has not been acquired in the natural course of hereditary refinement. These moral qualities reflect themselves in Art. When the painter looks at Nature or his subject only as a means to the display of some effect which he has been taught to consider desirable—that is affectation, a proof of Vulgarity. And when he fails to feel the more delicate appeals of Truth and Beauty, and exaggerates their force into violence of

dramatic action and of contrasted light and dark into crudity of colour and over-emphasised drawing, it is a proof of insensibility—the other form of Vulgarity (*M. P.*, vol. v. pt. ix. chaps. vii. viii.)

Another evidence of Vulgarity is in the pursuit of common and *animal* beauty in the human figure, as opposed to that beauty which is the expression of Morality and Intellect. The common ideal of "beauty mania" is eminently vulgar, partly because it is untrue, and partly because it appeals to the lower passions—to Æsthesis and not to Theoria (*M. P.*, vol. iii. chap. v.) The treatment of ordinary life need not be vulgar at all; great painters elevate even the commonest and most foolish of subjects by seeing them from high standpoints, as symbols and types of human life; and by indicating, perhaps unconsciously, their relation to broad ethical laws.

If it were true that Ruskin regarded the "literary subject" as contributing to the greatness of Art, he would not have affirmed so plainly the power of imaginative treatment. As it is, he teaches that the choice of a noble subject is one of the conditions of noble Art—but only the first and *least* important. "High" Art and purism, however sincere, are not enough to secure purity of Art and high moral tone. That is given in the treatment; and the treatment is the expression of character, conditioned by moral laws over which the artist has no control—the same laws which condition his will in every other department of human action.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE SOCIOLOGY OF ART

86. *Heredity.*—The first condition of a man's capacity for Art must be looked for in those circumstances of his breeding which make him—far more than he is willing to acknowledge—vulgar or refined, sensitive, sympathetic, truth-loving, or coarse, selfish, and cunning. We have seen that Art depends on these ethical qualities; and we have now to examine the sources of character and the circumstances of its development.

Art is not a thing that can be learnt from rules; the talent is instinctive, that is to say, the result of inherited memory; and this is the case as much in men as in other animals. The mere capacity for enjoying Art is denied to those who have not received it from a line of ancestors accustomed to take delight in beauty and thought. Landscape can be enjoyed only by a cultivated people, or their descendants who inherit their likes and dislikes (*L. A.*, § 24). All Art, whether in the nation or in the individual, is the result of a long course of previous life and training (on "The Study of Architecture," *O. R.*, vol. i. § 276). Fine

execution implies a mind and a body perfected by heredity and practice (*L. A.*, § 71).

We often see two students of apparently equal mental calibre, who differ enormously in their powers of learning to draw—to draw beautifully. It is absurd to suppose that the one who fails, fails only from inattention to the rules given by the master. Talent in one case is present; and talent means—what?

In ancient times Art was handed down from father to son, from son to grandson, or from uncle to nephew. It ran in families, notably in early Greece, among the earlier Italians, and among the Dutch. When Art became academical—a thing of rules and ingenuity, no longer the free employment of unconscious powers—and when it offered high prizes in wealth and reputation, it was "adopted as a profession" by clever men of all kinds; and very cleverly they have sustained their reputation. And yet in the biographies of those great artists whose ancestry is known, it is interesting to find how often there appears a father, or a grandfather, or an uncle, a mother, or some maternal relative engaged in some form of art, or richly endowed with powers that would have formed an artist. Where this seems not acknowledged, we usually find that very little is known about the artist's ancestry, as in the case of Giotto and Turner. Sometimes, indeed, a whole community is interested in the arts, like the Florentines of the fifteenth century, from whom one is not surprised at the appearance of genius in any family, as in Michelangelo. But far oftener the

talent is obviously hereditary, and enhanced by early training in the parental profession. Raphael is perhaps the most obvious example of a man whose inherited art-powers were developed by the best teaching, and raised to the height of genius by association with a strong nature and a powerful intellect. For it is not only the practice of Art that is necessary to breed an artist, but the practice of Morality, which endows him with a fine and capable character.

87. *Tradition.*—On the other hand, the native capabilities of the artist, though a necessary preliminary, are not alone sufficient to produce the highest kind of great Art; there must be right training. Great Art is not experimental. Experiments may be right and necessary in transition periods; but they cannot rank with the final development of perfected style. Tentative work may be deeply interesting, but its incomplete nature comes from want of hereditary power, or else from want of right teaching.

However creditable it is for a thinker to attempt to reconstruct a new system on the ruins of all previous thought, the history of philosophy shows that such attempts are not at once successful; that it takes two or three generations to arrive at a satisfactory theory on the new lines. Much more is this the case in Art, where so great part of success depends on the "studied result of accumulated observation and delightful habit." The originality which proves Art vital does not mean doing what nobody has ever seen attempted before; it means spontaneity of genuine thought

and unaffected feeling, working within traditionary bounds, with complete power and insight; it is parallel to the vexed conception of Freewill in Ethics, and as much misunderstood.

In reviewing the history of Art it becomes evident that the greatest achievements have been in *development* of existing ideals and methods, not in antagonism to them; and the more we know about the great schools, the more we are forced to recognise their continuity. It is mere ignorance which engenders the vanity of supposing that we can invent, at a stroke, a new style of architecture, a new method of looking at Nature, a new manner of painting: there is nothing new under the sun. At the same time it must be remembered that the influence both of heredity and tradition is only healthy when it is unconscious. The son of a great artist is commonly a very inferior painter; and all the rules of all the studios cannot produce a living work of Art.

In the ancient schools the affiliation of the painter or sculptor was obvious. Shut out from knowledge of any but the art of his race, his highest endeavour was to improve it into greater naturalism—the continuity was unbroken, and can be charted in a diagram. When, at the Renaissance, the artist could select from a variety of styles, and by travelling abroad graft upon his native ideals those of alien races, an eclectic manner was formed, and derivative style became possible. It was rare that eclecticism produced anything of vital power; and nowadays that the student goes far afield and dissipates his energies

in the attempt to combine all manner of incompatible ideals, we see everywhere a sort of hybrid experimentalism, which may indeed ultimately result in progress, but is, for the time, anarchic, absurd, and barbarous. The "Inglese Italianato" was the laughing-stock of last century; and now the Parisian Cockney claims the reversion of the wooden spoon.

When, however, not ideals but technical methods are the objects of the student's imitation, and when those methods are not incompatible with his native powers, he shows his wisdom in learning from those great masters at home or abroad who are most qualified to teach. Reynolds, in studying Titian's manner of colouring, was perfectly right; in recommending his pupils to attempt the grand style of Michelangelo he was wrong. The affiliation of one school to another is as much a fact in Art-history as the affiliation of one painter to another; it is quite a different thing from the refusal of tradition, from the contagion of fashion, and from eclecticism. It is even right and possible to hark back to earlier standpoints, as the Pre-Raphaelites did, and to attempt the re-introduction of methods which a degenerate school has forgotten. And yet even this has its dangers and its limits; affectation was the ruin of the Pre-Raphaelite School, and its originality, in the common sense of the word, was not so great as ignorant critics of the time imagined; it was original only when sincere in its search after Truth, not in the attempt to see Nature through the distorting panes of Gothic windows, to invent

strange postures, and to force its conceptions into mediæval framework. Its strength and success were in its truth to Nature, not in its break with tradition; it put in practice the precept of all the schools, the neglected precept to "learn of Nature," and so far as it adhered to that—not very original or audacious principle, it was supported by Ruskin; but he had no good word for its morbid fancies and resultant Æstheticism (*Academy Notes*, No. iv., 1858, p. 11).

88. *The Evolution of Art.*—It can never be too firmly asserted that the first condition of vital Art is the desire to represent Truth. With that condition an individual artist, and still more a school of artists, may hope to proceed to the illustration of Beauty and Imagination; but no progress is possible without it; Art becomes a mere repetition, and a gradually degenerating repetition, of forms once intended for Truth, but now mere patterns. This was seen in Scandinavian and Celtic Art, and it is the characteristic of most Oriental races—excepting the Japanese. There may be many reasons for this absence of the desire for Truth, the chief being some unhappiness in material or social circumstances, inclement dwelling-places, disordered condition of the body politic, oppression, and rapine—it matters little to the result whether they are the robbers or the robbed. But in all these cases vital Art is at a low ebb, and Great Art is impossible.

Sometimes out of anarchy and barbarism a nation is seen to spring with vigour, as if its roots had tapped some irrigating drainage or reached

some fertilising subsoil. And the first change that comes over the old barbarous Art exhibits a desire for portraiture. The early Greek Art, of Cyprus for example, shows this in a striking manner; the early Lombardic sculpture of S. Ambrogio at Milan (*T. P.*, § 32); the early Norman work,—not the derivative Norman of our northern cathedrals (*T. P.*, § 33), but such examples as Vézelay. In all these cases the only change that transforms barbarous and conventional manufacture into vital Art with potentialities of greatness, is the awakening of the artist to the power and desire of Representation: the traditionary forms of Art are followed, but the face of the Isis-Aphrodite (to take an example *penes me*) becomes a portrait of a real woman—the worm-twists on the brooches of Norway become the fighting beasts on the capitals of Normandy. To follow this question further would be—like the development of many of our paragraphs—to wander among deeply interesting detail; but our object is to get Ruskin's teaching in its general scope, and here we must rest satisfied with stating his main doctrine, that all Real Art *begins* with the love of Truth, that it attains greatness in proportion as it attains the power of representing Truth, and that it falls into decay when the conscious aim after Truth is replaced by the conscious desire of Beauty. The greatest Art secures Beauty, but does not make it the chief end and aim; decadent Art secures Truth, but only as a secondary purpose and by-end; nascent Art always tries for Truth, even at the expense of Beauty.

89. *The Great Schools.*—But the particular kind of Truth which a nascent school desires is determined by national ideals and character. Three schools have produced the greatest work in the world—three schools of quite separate aim and supereminent achievement—the Athenian, the Tuscan, and the Venetian. All other schools are either the roots or the fruits of these three. The Athenian was preceded by various developments in Egypt, Assyria, and Phœnicia, which went to form the material out of which the flower of Greek Art sprang; but nobody except an archæologist takes genuine pleasure in Assyrian bas-reliefs and Egyptian friezes, while every one, more or less, understands and approves the ideal of Pheidias. The Tuscan School culminated in Leonardo, Michelangelo, and Raphael; the Venetian in Titian, Veronese, and Tintoret: all primitive Italian, German, and Flemish craftsmen stand to these perfected artists just as Phœnician sculpture stands to Periclean—as collateral ancestry. And all subsequent serious Art owes its existence to the emulation of those great men, to rival whom, in their own provinces, every one has been prompted, but no one has been permitted. Thus the history of Art is mainly occupied by these three schools, for the trivial realism of ancient rhopography and modern genre-painting does not attempt all that Art can do; and is, consequently, not a fully developed specimen of that natural product which we are investigating; it is not "Great" Art, but an inferior and stunted variety. There is another development possible,

and partially illustrated—the modern Art of Landscape—but it is too soon to write its history. One can surely hope that the School of Wilson and Turner, of Prout and Cox, and of still surviving naturalistic masters, is not yet to be extinguished by a passing fashion of French Romanticism.

Omitting, then, the contemporary school (but not excepting it from the principles of our investigation), we are to note how the desire for Truth produced such different results, and how it manifested itself in the Imaginative Art of Athens, Florence, and Venice. We have already seen that Greek religion determined the anthropomorphism of Greek Art. Because the whole race believed in humanised conceptions, human powers, and humane virtues, its creed and myths and art of idol-making were directed to the study of human nature. For the first time the religious artist was bidden to look at something he could see with his eyes, and to copy it as he saw it; the natural Truth, which was only a by-play in earlier styles, became vehicle of the highest ideals. The very form of godhead, in Egypt and Assyria, was compounded of bestial shapes—nobly symbolic, perhaps, but not admitting of simply truthful treatment; at last, by the Greeks, it was conceived as purely human, and rendered by straightforward copying of the model. The conventional idealism, the generalised beauty of Greek faces and figures, was a product of the decadence; early Greek faces are portraits, and early Greek figures are the most naïve attempts at simple

representation of models studied from Nature, though posed according to tradition. The whole strength of Greek Art is based on this habit of truthfulness, and if, at the time when the mimetic power was fully developed, Greek social and political life had not broken up and fallen to pieces, a great school of portraiture would doubtless have been formed, anticipating the achievements of later ages; but the decadence was too rapid, and nothing was left for Greek Art but prettinesses and sensualities, upon which to employ its unparalleled technical abilities (*L. A.*, § 104).

It is commonly supposed that Mr. Ruskin is exclusively devoted to Gothic and Landscape, to the exclusion of Classical Art; but that is not so. He has energetically opposed the debased and decadent Art of the Roman Empire and the twice-derivative Art of the Roman Renaissance. He has contrasted with them the vital powers of Gothic and Landscape, with a fulness of exposition which has made him the champion of northern and modern styles and ideals. But that does not prevent his taking a genuine interest in Greek Art of the great age leading up to Pheidias, as the *Queen of the Air* and *Aratra Pentelici* sufficiently testify (*T. P.*, § 80); and the reader who knows Ruskin's home will remember that Greek statuary, vases, and coins are among its most valued treasures and conspicuous ornaments.

The Greek love of Truth, then, created the school of figure-sculpture, which began in realism, though it developed into idealism—to adopt the

common meaning of the term; that is to say, the conventional, generalised drawing of classical figure-sculpture was a stage into which the early search after particular Truth passed; and out of which the imitators of Classic Art have not generally risen, though the greater masters of Greece in its greatest period were not content without specialisation, without individualisation. It was one of the charges against Pheidias that he introduced his own portrait and that of Pericles into sacred subjects.

The Tuscan School was formed upon a quite different ideal of Religion and Morality—ascetic Christianity of the more intellectual type. Its object was to "paint soul"—to give human character as expressed chiefly in the face, secondarily in the limbs. As the Greek love of the human body degenerated into fleshliness, so the Tuscan love of spirituality was likely to degenerate into morbid and affected sensibility; but in both the love of truth was the condition of vitality—fact was the starting-point; so that the tendency of the healthiest development of Athenian Art was to add spirituality to bodily perfection, and that of Tuscan progress was to add bodily beauty to the beauty of holiness. How far this went without any direct imitation of the antique is seen in the tomb of Ilaria di Caretto (Lucca Cathedral), in which the recumbent figure is a Gothic effigy with all the breadth and sweetness of the best Greek work.

The Venetians were brought up in quite another set of associations: they represented a

third distinct character. They were fishers, sailors, traders, comparatively removed from the influence of the Church, with something of Teutonic individualism about them (*M. P.*, chap. v. p. 219). The characteristic of their mind was common sense rather than Tuscan refinement, but not the scepticism of unbelievers; proud but honest, playful but not frivolous, strong but refined, they were sympathetic with a wider range throughout Nature than the Florentines, and their Art reflected their mind and temper (*S. V., passim*). Here it was the truth of aspect of external Nature that chiefly attracted the aim of Art; not the body or soul exclusively of man, but man in all his surroundings. Consequently no school before that of Venice took such an interest in drapery and costume and in landscape; and the Venetians are represented by Reynolds as the Dutch part of the Italian genius—that is, the Romantic or Teutonic; while the Tuscans approach nearer than other Italians to Greek ideals. This may partly be due to race—the ancient Etruscan strain surviving in the one place, while the Venetians are Italian only in language, being the descendants of a mixed multitude neither Latin nor Greek. But the differences of habitation and employment are enough to account for the differences of mental and moral temper; and this last explains the difference of artistic ideal. Both, however, began with definite realistic intention. (The difference between Greek and Gothic Schools in matters of treatment is noticed later on.)

90. *The Age of the Masters.*—These three

characters formed the three great schools—anthropomorphism the Athenian, Christian asceticism the Tuscan, and Christian "worldly" life the Venetian: to which may be added the Protestant School of Landscape, as we noted, not yet matter of history. In these schools the beginning was the desire of Truth, coincident with political and social upstriving, respectively on the Ægean, in Central Italy, and on the Adriatic. At last the political movement reached in every case its height; the social ideals reached, as nearly as might be, their fulfilment; and then they began to give place to the decline. But Art did not attain its full perfection until the nation had passed its meridian in matters political and social. I do not remember that Mr. Ruskin gives a reason for this, though he notes the fact; but when we recollect that beautiful Art can be produced only by people who have beautiful things to look at, and leisure to look about them (*T. P.*, § 90), we see that the perfection of external security and the realisation of good government are necessary *preliminaries* to the full development of Art. The artist who is to do the best work must, of course, be born and brought up, not in the turmoil, danger, and dissatisfaction of the period of growth, but in the comfort and culture of a completed civilisation. Consequently his work must linger half a century beyond the meridian turning-point; and that point is more rapidly passed in history than one would think, or than one could wish. This is why we find Pheidias contemporary with Kleon and Alkibiades; Raphael and Michelangelo with

the Medici and the Renaissance Popes; Titian and Tintoret with the fall of Venice and the introduction of dissolute morals and luxurious living.

In spite of this fact, the acme of Art can never be very greatly in arrear of the acme of social and moral virtue and development. In special places smaller schools come to their full power at various times; for example, there is a distinct rise, greatness, and decay in each of the states of mediæval Italy, in each of the nations of mediæval Europe. The Gothic architecture of any place, its various artistic crafts and manufactures, claim a separate inquiry, for the causes which create and condition them are not identical with those which fix the period and the scope of the highest formative art, painting. And yet in all the minor Arts the growing time is that in which Truth is the artist's aim; the great time is that in which some climax of national character is attained—the full development of the special character which is reflected in the special Art; and the decadence is marked by the preference of Beauty to Truth, corresponding with luxury in the society producing or demanding the special Art. And these minor crafts are higher in rank in proportion as they approach the subjects and standards of the highest Art of the time —that is to say, in the Middle Ages, Painting. Gothic architecture is greatest when its figure-sculpture is best and most prominent; in its decadence (Flamboyant and Perpendicular styles) the figures are subordinate to the niche-work (*T. P.*, § 38).

By the *Age of the Masters* Ruskin understands

that which immediately precedes the final efflorescence and grandest manifestation of national style; for the artists in whom all previous tradition and heredity is summed up and displayed are masters of no great men, teachers only of degenerate pupils. Bellini and Verrocchio and Ghirlandajo and Perugino are the masters, properly so called; Giorgione and Titian, Leonardo and Michelangelo and Raphael, failed to hand on the Art to still greater men, though Luini, Leonardo's pupil, was a greater artist, according to Ruskin, than history and criticism have yet admitted, and Tintoret was in a sense a pupil of Titian. But the period was a climax; after it the decadence.

91. *Decadence.*—Of all things it is most important, in connection with what I call, for want of a better name, the Sociology of Art, to grasp the truth that on the one hand these periods of rise and consummation and decay do exist, and are conditioned by public morals and politics; and on the other hand that by anticipation and by reversion important art-work may be done at any time. Even in an age of decadence—and in spite of much whitewashing such ages do stand out in history as blots and patches of decay—even then the conditions of talent exist in places: country villages breed up men of the old blood; some of the towns-families preserve the traditions of rectitude and sobriety; and out of these may spring at any moment a man with the highest gifts.

And then the question arises, What use will be made of those gifts? Mr. Ruskin's frequent lamentations over the use to which the world has

put the talent it has found, the way in which society has ruined such and such a genius—these are all to be understood and justified by his Philosophy of Art. They mean that Art is produced by a talent God-given in so far as all good and perfect work is God's giving—the result of Godly and manly life; but also in accordance with demand, the demand being the voice of the people, which is not always the voice of God, but sometimes the plain temptation of the Evil One. It is only when the talent meets with a demand for its highest use that the highest result is attained. The "public of one" is not a stimulating public; an isolated genius fallen on evil times can do little more than show his power—he cannot fully use it. The indignant remonstrances of *Modern Painters* against those who misunderstood and consequently crippled artists who might have done even better things in this century, for example, are accurately justified but naturally unacceptable. A man like Turner, finding his own standard unappreciated, and his normal progress decried, stiffened his back against his public, and painted to puzzle them; other men of less independent character abandoned their own ideals, and worked for popularity. In either case the result fell far short of what they might have done had they found a welcome for their exertions and an intelligent acceptance, tolerant of necessary shortcomings and appreciative of the advancement gained. That demands a very high standard of public intelligence?—Precisely; and in the ages when really great Art has flourished, such a high standard must have been

reached; in those times when men—now seen to be the leaders of their art—were unacceptable, the standard of public intelligence must have been low and inadequate.

And yet in any period of decadence good work is being done, good within its limits and in its way; chiefly, however, as showing cleverness, the least of all the virtues of Art. But to the philosopher it is not a pleasant sight to see the cleverness which might have been put to noble ends sacrificed on adorning cruelty or pampering luxury. And after a while even this cleverness dies out, as in the decline of Rome; coarseness and sensationalism, the taint of slovenly work and indolent thought, pervade everything; and the very skill of technique—the last thing to go—is lost in superinduced barbarism.

92. *Local Art.*—But all the world does not move with parallel strides to vigour and then to decay. In every country, in every district, there are separate movements; and every place has had, or can have, its own Art, great or small, as the place rises to importance in world-history or keeps its comparative obscurity. Here comes in the distinction between vital Art and that which is really great. Many a vital art and craft has existed which has not risen to the greatness of the Athenian or Tuscan or Venetian Schools, simply because the place has never been an Athens or a Florence or a Venice. In Gothic building, for example, every district has its school and its history; though the most perfectly developed Gothic has been shown only where the political and

social virtues have been most clearly brought out. Though France, before the Renaissance, had fallen from that conscious leadership of civilisation which was taken by Italy, she stood first in the Middle Ages; and her Gothic is a creation by itself, vital and great in its degree (*L. A. P.*, § 21).

And when we look into the work of small districts we find everywhere some vital art, it may be only one of the minor crafts, but still living and powerful. The characteristics that mark off one school from another are those of very delicately discriminated individualities, none the less discriminated, and depending for their value upon the fact of their discrimination. Almost every town in Italy, every province of France, every state in Ancient Greece, has had its own separate school; and the derivative Sham Art, a thing of eclecticism and patches, was unknown until, towards the end of the sixteenth century, Flemings and French tried to combine their native ideals with Italian classicism. It is not the provincialism of a school that condemns it; on the contrary, a living art may exist in the remotest provinces, while the metropolis swarms with the moth and reddens with the rust of dead Art.

"All Great Art, in the great times of Art, is *provincial*, showing its energy in the capital, but educated, and chiefly productive, in its own country town. The best works of Correggio are at Parma, but he lived in his patronymic village; the best works of Cagliari are at Venice, but he learned to paint at Verona; the best works of Angelico are at Rome, but he lived at Fésole;

the best works of Luini at Milan, but he lived at Luino. And with still greater necessity of moral law, the cities which exercise forming power on style are themselves provincial. There is no Attic style, but there is a Doric and Corinthian one. There is no Roman style, but there is an Umbrian, Tuscan, Lombard, and Venetian one. There is no Parisian style, but there is a Norman and Burgundian one. There is no London or Edinburgh style, but there is a Kentish and Northumbrian one" (*A. E.*, Appendix).

93. *National Art.*—Though the capital of any country is not the true focus of its real Art power, the national spirit determines both the talent of the individual workman and the use to which it will be put. One of the fallacies of more recent times has been to attempt a reconciliation of incompatible ideals; to force the spirit of one age into that of another; to naturalise exotic tastes and to nurture them up in the hothouse of dilettantism. All the pseudo-classic Art of this century is alien; and just as alien is the Gothic revival wherever it tries to adopt the externals of mediæval work. What we have to learn from the Greeks is not to draw or carve nude figures with conventional anatomy, but to approach Nature with that earnest observation by which the Greeks of the great age learned their business. And similarly, though the thirteenth century was a noble time both in its chivalry and in its decorative ability, we do not want either the life or the decorations of the thirteenth century back again. It was founded on the pride of aristocracy, the

luxury of the few, the adornment of war, the exaltation of a creed that has passed away (*T. P.*, § 92). We want to learn and imitate the truthful and sincere attitude of mind by which Art, even under those circumstances, became Vital; and our own spirit will show itself for what it is worth when we have achieved the ideal of a nation which has learned to avoid the luxury of the past and to escape the drudgery of the present.

We cannot decorate like the mediævals because we are too busy about little things. In their days events alternated with repose; stirring the imagination, and then leaving it to act. We may imitate their ornament with some success; but that is not Vital and Original Art. Again, the instinct of decoration is hereditary, and we have lost it; perhaps our labour may begin a new train of development, but it cannot accomplish great things now. Here and there, by the rejection of national spirit, a man succeeds in decorating; but you find he is a stranger in the land, either an actual foreigner, or else a recluse or a poet, living wholly in the past, stirring his mind with histories of his own invention, and not letting it flag every forenoon after the petty excitements of the morning newspaper. Decoration is impossible to the average Englishman as he stands in average life at present (read on this subject *L. A.*, Lect. i.)

We cannot rise to pure Ideal Art, not only because we have no fixed and deep beliefs capable of being translated into plastic form, but also because the temper of the English mind is

humorous and burlesque. Of this Chaucer and Shakespeare and Byron are examples, with their intrusion of comic and even coarse ideas amidst sublimity and poetry. Whenever we attempt the Michelangelesque we fail. We must be content with other walks, if we want true and vital work.

We *can* paint portraits. The very insight which makes us humorous and coarse helps us out in characterisation; and our great portraitists hold their own in history.

We can paint domestic genre for the same reason; and animals. The charm of mingled sweetness and sourness, of the pleasing and the grotesque, is quite within the range of English genius. We have had Vital Art in these kinds, and still have it.

We can paint landscape. The fact of our dwelling in towns gives us pleasure in country scenery (*L. A.*, § 24). Our hereditary memory, such as it is, has already filled our minds with instinctive sympathy for Nature; and the associations of history endear the features of our land, and of other countries in which we have an interest, to our imagination. "The instinctive love of landscape in us has this deep root, which, in your minds, I will pray you to disencumber from whatever may oppress or mortify it, and to strive to feel with all the strength of your youth that a nation is only worthy of the soil and the scenes that it has inherited when by all its acts and arts it is making them more lovely for its children" (*L. A.*, § 25). And this leads us to the Political Economy of Art.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF ART

94. *The Sources of Art.*—Two of the conditions required for the production of Vital Art have been already noticed; the moral condition providing an artist, and the social providing him with a public. The third condition is that which provides him with a subject, with something by way of model, and materials, and conveniences for pursuing his work; and this is the contribution of political economy. Whatever be the artist's talent, and whatever be the public's demand, it is obvious that the result must after all depend greatly upon the third factor; for landscape would be impossible in a black country,—one does not call a view of smoke and blazes a landscape; and portraiture would be impossible in a prison-hospital,—for one does not call studies of vice and disease portraiture. To paint a landscape you must *see* a landscape; to paint a fine portrait you must see a fine head. And as all the Art we are likely to get in England is either portraiture or landscape, or that combination of the two which is called domestic genre, it becomes of importance to inquire after the

security of our tenure of the materials for these arts. Is our scenery likely to degenerate? are our people likely to degenerate? for when the subjects are spoiled British Art will have to make bricks without straw.

Human interference does not necessarily spoil Nature; indeed the whole surface of cultivated land is in its way beautiful, and it is quite artificial; only our moors and our mountains are wild, and even they have been disafforested by man. But still in cultivated districts something of the spirit of Nature is gone, something of the sense of divine spontaneity; and we have instead a neatness which is akin to vulgarity. Only the less imaginative painters are content with hedgerows and fatted cattle and the barnyard; it is not landscape, but the debatable land between that and domestic genre.

But by increasing the sense of Nature's power, without diminishing the labour of man, we get an increase of beauty and sublimity, and to the imaginative mind the scene becomes a noble subject for Art. In the Alps the castles and terraced fields are so entirely subordinate to the enormous Titan powers that dominate them that their presence is not an intrusion; it is a relief to the overwhelming sense of sublimity; it brings in associations of human power and sympathy in mitigation of Nature's sternness (*T. P.*, § 2).

Take away all trace of man, and what was sublime becomes terrific—the beautiful Nature becomes like the Queen of the Læstrygones, who was so gigantic that Odysseus and his companions

"loathed her." A touch of humanity is needed to make the world akin to us; without the sense of human power and presence we are lost.

But the other extreme is equally removed from Art—when man has invaded Nature and destroyed her, and blotted out all her life to make way for his factories, and mines, and dockyards, and weary miles of shoddy suburb—there is no landscape there, nor any subject for Vital Art. An experiment or two may be made, as Turner showed at Dudley and Newcastle, but it is not an experiment that bears much repetition.

It must be understood, however, that it is not the presence of man that destroys the subject of Art, far from it; but the presence of incomplete man,—man in his rough and coarse selfishness, getting all he can out of Nature, and making a slave of her; not satisfied to rule by obeying Nature's laws. When man becomes more civilised he makes his dwellings and surroundings beautiful; and himself he adorns and refines, until no fairer subject for a great picture can be imagined than the Acropolis of Athens in its glory, or the festivals and functions in Florence or Venice. Such were the subjects presented by those ancient cities to the artists who immortalised their names; and these scenes of splendid architecture, with their population of heroic figures, were the products of the national policy and economy.

Therefore one condition of Art is that the country should be beautiful and the people noble. This is called Ruskin's Sentimentalism; but the reader who has followed the argument so far will

see that, however Utopian his doctrines may sound, they have a basis of fact. Decorative Art begins in feeding and clothing all, and in making the externals of life beautiful, for it is impossible for a strong and vital artistic feeling to coexist with squalor (*L. A.*, § 121). Trades and manufacture requiring the use of fire destroy the beauty of the country; landscape Art can only exist where there is landscape scenery; it coexists with agriculture, not with widely extended mining and manufacturing, which deform alike the homes and the persons of the inhabitants (*L. A.*, § 123). No true Art can develop without previous elevation of the populace out of barbarism into civilisation; the peasant must learn to say his grace before drink, as well as his grace before meat (*L. A.*, § 120); his labour must be made compatible with dignity and intelligence; his home and surroundings must become pleasant and beautiful; and then the evolution of a new and nobler Art is begun.

Of late years we have seen much realistic painting of dirt and disorder, powerfully done, appealing to benevolence, purging by pity and terror. But such work is merely didactic; it may be useful in its way, but it does not aspire to the union of Truth, Imagination, and Beauty, which has marked the confessedly greatest reaches of the Art. And without denying the use of such pictures, we cannot place them in the same rank with the realisation of noble ideals.

It is objected, of course, that the sacrifice is too great. For all our manufacture and commerce

are we to get only a few painted canvases and carved stones? If we are to choose between a cotton-mill and a Titian—a home-bred Artist, index of the achieved crown of civilisation, warrant of widespread rectitude and purity of life, token of true faith in whatever creed may present itself as ultimately believable; proof of a lovely land nobly inhabited—which are we to choose?

95. *Art-Wealth.*—In a commercial state, pictures and sculpture and all that Art can do are looked upon as commodities whose value is what they will fetch. The extension of our trade has made us more jealous of foreign genius than conscious of our own limitations—more anxious to sell our rubbish than to buy their masterpieces (*L. A.*, § 6), and such Art as is cultivated is valued for its price in the market. But if the Sociology of Art teaches anything, it teaches that no vital Art-skill can be developed with a view to money-getting; it must be the outcome of an evolution on the normal lines (*L. A.*, § 7), and so Ruskin has always strongly combated the movements which seek to teach Art to the people as a paying trade.

Whatever does us good is wealth; and the good it does us cannot be always measured by money. Money will not buy Art, if it be not in the market; and it is not in the market unless it is grown on a fit soil, from proper seed, under the right conditions. Much imitation of it, Sham Art, there is; but the real article is rarely come by; and, when it is found, goes at the price of the imitation article. Its true value is not to be measured by its cost in

pounds, shillings, and pence. What then is its true value? (*J. E.*, Lect. i.)

Art is wealth, because it can do for us two things that cannot be otherwise acquired: it gives the highest and most lasting pleasure, and it is the truest and easiest means for instruction. That Art is a pleasure to the spectator—when it is real Art, and the spectator is civilised enough to understand it—goes without much saying; that it is a pleasure to the artist has been commonly believed until lately, when some writers of more sympathy than insight have taken to bemoaning the lot of the poor artist who cannot paint as well as he wants to, and cannot sell his work when it is done. To all this sentimentalism there is a short answer, rude but not unkind: If you do not like painting, do not think anybody will like your picture. Take to some easier form of Art work; be a decorator or a carver. If you mean that you find it hard to grow rich on painting, thank your stars that you can be an honest man. The very greatest artists made a fair competence by dint of industry and frugality; and much of the best work in all ages has been done for next to nothing. And if your distaste for work is a mere distaste for work, not for Art, do not give the lie to your nature, but call things by their right names. Most real artists are never happy unless they are painting; all civilised nations and persons get their greatest pleasure out of one or other of the Fine Arts.

Secondly, it is the best means of instruction. Not only, though this is a great thing, that it keeps history alive, but to what extent they are

aided by the Plastic and Graphic Arts is shown by the development of book-illustration, the use of museums, the modern dioramic lecture. Through the eye the mind is most easily reached and securely held. And when the student can draw, and studies his natural history, or geography, or mineralogy, or whatever it be, with the pencil in his hand, he never fails to learn more, to observe more closely, to remember more clearly whatever he has once drawn. As a help to school-teaching it is only now gradually being understood that drawing and modelling can be used with unparalleled effect; but Ruskin pointed that out in clear language over thirty years ago (*Pol. Econ. of Art*, Lect. ii., 1857).

What money can buy, what mill can weave, the wizard cloak that brings the wearer happiness? What mine can deliver up the magic crystal through which man sees the things of heaven and earth in the light of universal law? And that is what a real and vital Art can do when it is nationally understood and practised. It is the means of civilisation and the measure of culture.

96. *Discovery.*—The labour of an individual or of a nation suffices for all needs, and the political economy of Art, as of any other product, is the science of finding and using this kind of wealth in the people and for the people. How far this is the business of the Government, as we now constitute governments, may be doubted; but if we understand by government all organised effort for regulating our affairs, it is plain that we may direct our present organisations either well or ill.

Writing long before recent Socialism was in the air (J. E.), Ruskin showed that there are certain duties incumbent on the community at large, in whatever form its spirit be considered to be displayed and administered; and that when those duties are neglected Art decays. An ideal commonwealth would reflect and enforce them; as things stand, there are bodies of artists incorporated for the purpose of governing the world of Art, and, what is a still greater power, there is the press and the opinion of patronising society. In *St. George's Commonwealth*, the imagined Utopia which Ruskin, imitating Plato, has pictured, a paternal government would doubtless efficiently control the production and distribution of Art. But in this present world we find as real a power in the hands of the community. People are not ambitious enough, he says; they are content to be merchants when they might be counsellors and rulers. One thing should be noted in Ruskin's Utopian scheme, that he does not allow the justice of the demand for education and employment unless the government that gives it has the right and power to direct it; there must be a *quid pro quo*. Remember also that he does not believe in retrogression; he believes in the old-fashioned virtues of Loyalty and Faith, but not in any recurrence to ancient modes of administration. (The next four headings are noted from J. E.)

To discover Art is the first requirement. Art cannot be made, any more than gold can be made. Teaching can develop it, but it must be there to

begin with; but since the products of a nation suffice for its needs, native art-power of the right sort for native use is sure to be available. Much exists among the lower classes — no "artless peasantry" is possible (*L. A.*, § 79); but much of it is wasted by the employment of men, who might be artists in the minor crafts, upon mechanical labour. The artificers who are now engaged in manufacture might, in many cases, be more usefully and profitably engaged upon decorative work, which would bring out their true capacities, and give them a higher and happier life. The discovery of this latent talent could be made in school-time by proper teaching and uncompetitive examination; it could be further developed and sifted by employment upon public works. Since the time when this advice was given steps have been taken in many places towards the attainment of this Utopian ideal. The minor arts are coming into prominence, and schools are formed here and there which select and train the talent which has been found to exist more widely than was suspected, and work has been made for capable workmen in newly-established arts and crafts. But these affairs are only in their infancy, so long has it taken for the advice given in 1857 to fructify.

Another way in which Art can be discovered is by wise criticism, sound and kindly; appreciative of rising power; discriminative of mere cleverness and solid endeavour; undisturbed by popular clamour and passing fashion. This is a Utopian ideal indeed.

97. *Application.*—The talent once found must be saved and utilised; it must not be permitted to blaze up into premature popularity, nor to be crushed out by adversity and oblivion and the competition of worthless rivals. The struggle for life is not, according to Ruskin, the law of God; and so far from the survival of the fittest being its result in Art, it tends to eliminate genius and to exalt the astute manufacturer of popular goods.

In the public works of which he has spoken he points out that the young workman should be set, first to *various* work, for the variety is stimulating; there is more done for the money, because the worker is interested in what he is doing. Secondly, to *easy* work; that is, in material which lends itself to plastic form, as marble opposed to granite—still more, to diamond-cutting. And thirdly, to *lasting* work, which will accumulate and add to the wealth of the country. An enormous amount of real talent is thrown away upon illustrations, decorations, dress, and other forms of luxury that perish with the using; that serve only for the period of the fashion, and then are destroyed. Work of all kinds should be in the most lasting material, and the public should buy only what they mean to keep. On which subject Mr. Ruskin has said many things in all his work, and his Utopian ideal is now beginning to be recognised by the better class of workers and buyers everywhere.

98. *Accumulation.*—The permanence of Art has this fancied drawback, that without such waste as hitherto has kept the supply down, we might

be flooded with Great Art. There is no very serious fear upon that score; the present prices for really good work are such as to be prohibitive to middle-class buyers, who are forced to content themselves with reproductions, and to make believe that the manufactured copy is equal to the original. Not that much cleverness is not shown in these art-manufactures of chromolithography and engraving, but the high general average of these products fatigues the public taste (*L.A.*, § 10), and the colourable imitations they present of Real Art tend to confuse the public judgment, and insidiously to weaken it. It may be good that every cottage has its picture on the wall; but habituation to the vulgarised effectiveness and tawdry cleverness of the "Christmas Supplement" can only result in a loss of feeling for more refined Art. One sight a year—one glimpse in a lifetime—of really great work gives a lifelong impetus. What artist does not recollect some one picture or statue, seen for a moment in his youth, and pedestalled in his memory ever since as the ideal of his aspirations and the stimulus of his endeavours? And in a house full of cheap prints who cares enough about them to *do* anything for their sake? As a matter of fact they are neglected, or if noticed, blunt the eye and mind. They are only fit for the vulgar.

Now it would be much better if every household could barter all the prints and photographs it possesses for one real work of Vital Art, which would furnish perennial pleasure and instruction; and when the nation is more civilised and the

people begin to understand the difference between Living Art and Sham, the demand for better things will increase. It is perhaps true that our cheap reproductive Art is a stage in advance of the inartistic past; it may perhaps be true that the highest standards are not "practical"; but it is a question now of ideals and not of opportunism, of principle and not of makeshift; and so judged the cheap reproductions of the day are condemned by this political economy as crowding out the real wares, and standing in the way of the demand for Real Art.

If the power now directed to this kind were put into original work, there would be no fear but prices would come down, and pictures and craft-products would be plenty. The over-production of True and Vital Art need not be feared at present. And yet, on the other hand, the spectator —and still more the student—learns more by spending a day with a single good picture in some country house than by expatiating in all the wealth of the National Gallery; that is, he learns more of the secrets of Art, for the dates of the painters and so forth are not part of artistic knowledge. Therefore it is conceivable that the time might come when good Art should be over-accumulated; but as that will be long hence—in the decadence of the period to which we are now struggling up out of barbarism—we must expect it as necessary and accept it as inevitable.

Meanwhile the waste of great work that has gone on in the world has been enormous: waste by war, by mouldering decay of bad material, by

neglect, by contemptuous destruction, and—most gratuitous and blameworthy of all—by "restoration." One form of wise economy is the preservation by whatever means, at home and abroad, of the monuments of past Art; in example of which Mr. Ruskin suggested that wealthy Manchester men might buy some of the ancient palaces at Verona, as they buy modern villas near Florence, and preserve them from Austrian bombardment, then anticipated; but the Manchester men did not quite grasp his meaning at the time.

99. *Distribution.*—As Art is useful for instruction, the placing of good pictures and ornaments in schools—at least in the higher schools—would help to fix the attention and inform the mind. For this purpose scientific, archæological, and didactic Art is useful; the "High Art" of the historical painter has no appeal to boys, they use the Academical cartoon on their school stairs as a target for pen-darts (believe an eye-witness). But that is no proof of the fallacy of Ruskin's doctrine, rather the reverse. Pictures and objects of Art are found in many schools to be most powerfully influential and sincerely admired; but they must be living Art—that is, not historical "high" Art. Schools and churches and all buildings where men assemble for amusement, or instruction, or deliberation, should be decorated with the best work that can be got; they are the proper places upon which to bestow the wealth for which there is no money value. At railway stations we do not assemble for amusement or instruction, but only to get out of them as quickly

as possible; consequently it is not to be allowed that railway stations are fit and proper objects for decoration; and yet by the perversity of our anarchic economy the most attractively ornamented of our public buildings are stations and restaurants —the one kind as an apology for their existence; the other with intention and character purely meretricious.

There are, however, pictures that cannot be hung in a school or a church, nor counted part of the decoration of a modern building—the monumental works of old masters, valuable to us from historical associations and as standards of artistic achievement. The most obvious destination for such things is the museum or gallery; and so long as private houses are closed to the student and sightseer, and ordinary public buildings inharmonious with ancient Art of the more ideal kind, it is necessary to maintain museums. There are, however, these objections: that a foolish curator may make them useless by bad arrangement, or the introduction of ill-chosen examples, or, worst of all, by "restoring" works whose interest is in their authenticity and their beauty in qualities too subtle for the eye and mind of the populace. Still, these great works are public heirlooms, not to be appraised in money value, nor to be grasped by private purchasers, but to be kept by the nation at large in national treasuries, from which base and Sham Art must be excluded.

Modern Art, however, intended to appeal to modern men and women in the midst of their ordinary employments, ought not to be withdrawn

from the sphere of its immediate influence. It ought to be found in the household, in the street, in the school, in the place of assembly. While even a glimpse of a great work is stimulating, the full power of good Art does not tell upon the mind without perpetual presence and ever-recurring influence; and it is the test of goodness that this presence is not wearying, like that of shams. Consequently every civilised home ought to contain its work of Real Art—one being enough; and quantity always and in everything must be subordinated to quality.

100. *The Wages of Art.*—To this end the price of pictures should be kept down, so that every one may possess his specimen or two—not his gallery—of really good and great and pleasure-giving and instructive Art. Such broadcast distribution would not impoverish the artist; for the free purchase of modern work at moderate prices would stimulate at once the supply and the demand; for every picture is an advertisement of the right sort—a sample which can be tested and tasted by all comers.

It is not the amount of money expended by the buyer that helps or ensures the production of Art; it is the amount of brains and of taste. It is perfectly open to any one to study the principles by which a picture is to be judged, and a civilised and educated man is assumed to have made this study part of his education; buyers who contribute only the money and none of the judgment are justly looked down upon as ignorant and boorish. On the other hand, the confidence in

the light of nature displayed by some buyers of individualistic character is as misleading as it would be in the selection of a medicine; anybody can study the principles of Art, but without such study very few persons may venture to offer an opinion.

The mere expense of a picture, the richness of decorative material, the rareness of the article, and so on, are nothing to the question. Art is at its work when it is giving beautiful and quaint forms to common and useful things, such as stuffs adapted for everyday use (*T. P.*, § 96). The Wages of Art are earned in the consciousness of widespread pleasure and instruction, in the knowledge of function fulfilled, in the reflection of an instinct satisfied. And the true artist who identifies himself with the spirit of Art can more or less accept this point of view. In order to work he must, however, live.

The plan of employing young artists upon public buildings—as carvers and decorative painters and so on—has been noticed above. The wages at such work should be equable and moderate; the worse men, instead of being underpaid, should be weeded out and set to other employments; the better men, instead of being flushed with praise and pay, should be kept in steady and full occupation, but withheld from overtaxing their powers by taking more on their hands than they can accomplish.

Then when they are past the journeyman stage, the best condition for their healthy progress and occupation would be the mean between great

success and great neglect. Low prices, stimulating industry but ensuring sale (not more than £100 for a water-colour and £500 for an oil-painting, Ruskin said in 1857); steady patronage of living artists and living Art, as opposed to doubtful "old masters" and acknowledged cheap copying and imitation; no high fancy prices to tempt real painters astray, to induce persons of more ingenuity than talent to paint pot-boilers and infringe the unwritten law of the copyright of style. Many of the mistakes of patronage are due to the artists, who abuse its favour and merit its caprice. The relations of the consumer and producer are just the same in this business as in any other business. The reaction of supply and demand still holds good; the consumer tempts the producer to supply the inferior article, and the producer tempts the consumer to demand it; but this happens only in a bad, barbarous, or decadent condition of society; it indicates a low state of public morality; it is not a law of nature, only a symptom of disease. Even at the worst times a really good picture is always ultimately bought and approved, unless deformed by faults which the artist is too proud or too weak to correct (*L. A.*, § 7).

101. *The Work of Art.*—Two uses of Art have been noticed in this chapter as contributing wealth of an especial kind to the common fund: the pleasure derived from it, and the instruction it preserves and conveys. Above, we saw that Art "enforces religion, perfects morality, and performs material service" (*L. A.*, § 66); so that one

use has yet to be considered, the material service —the contribution to, not the mental and spiritual, but the physical needs of man. This involves the notion of Art as an activity, not as a mere language; and it is based on a much wider view than Ruskin at first adopted.

The first beginnings of civilisation are seen in the arts of pottery, dress, architecture, smithy-work, and so on; and it is the law of these industries in their early and normal evolution that the useful shape is also the artistic one; in proportion as the structure is logically developed, the aspect is beautiful, that is, it pleases the eye and the imagination. This is, of course, complicated when we come to the more elaborate works of more advanced civilisation, because the whole thing, and its whole use, are not seen at any one time in the unity which makes the logical development of a cup, or a cloak, or a simple stone building, or iron ploughshare, so harmonious. But for a long way Art and Craft necessarily go hand in hand, and it is not impossible for them to retain their hold upon one another to the end. The point where they part company is the point at which the normal requirements of human life pass into luxury and display; the eye, till then satisfied with simple and logical beauty, wants fanciful and startling form; the mind finds a new delight, but a perilous one, in bizarre effects, where construction and ornamentation are opposed. This is not necessarily wrong, but it is not necessarily right; and in the cases in which—as in Italian marble decoration—there is no deception attempted, but

a useful and preservative outer coating is given to masonry, or in painted woodwork, or in any other legitimate concealment of structure—in these cases a subordinate use replaces the primary one, and the law is not contradicted.

Wherever Art is useless, where ornament is illogical, and Beauty combats with Truth, the decadence sets in. After all is said that can be said about higher aims, the question still remains: "What use is this picture, or carving, or embroidery, or building?" and the more completely Use and Beauty have been fused together, the more perfectly are the ends of Art answered. And in these days again, as in the earlier times when the earth had to be reclaimed for man's use, and its powers brought into his hand, we need this simple and economic work of Art; we need the beginnings of a new and extended civilisation to replace the makeshift, disorderly, sordid, and squalid modes of life to which men, as a whole, have lately been accustomed. And the raising of the lower classes is not to be done by beginning at the wrong end, by giving them museums and music-concerts,—but by setting the arts to their primitive use, and bidding them make homes and clothes and the utensils and means of living, at once useful and beautiful for all (*L. A.*, Lect. iv.) "The Fine Arts are not to be learned by locomotion, but by making the homes we live in lovely, and by staying in them; not by competition, but by doing our quiet best in our own way; not by exhibition, but by doing what is right, and making what is honest, whether it be exhibited or not

and, for the sum of all, men must paint and build neither for pride nor for money, but for love—for love of their art, for love of their neighbour, and for whatever better love may be than these, founded on these."

# CHAPTER XIII

## ARCHITECTURE

102. *The Genesis of Art.*—There are two ways of getting at the Laws of Art, as distinct from the recapitulation of the rules of any given school: one way is the *a priori* high road, starting from present requirements, treading the apparently firm ground of common sense and logical deduction, and arriving at ideal perfection; the other way is the historical method, which starts from the beginnings of civilisation, traces the course of development, like some ancient road over mountain and moor, from one necessary vantage-point to another through intervening morass or wild wood—the variable track of human progress to achieved results. The first way is not always so safe as it looks; and the second not so sufficient as it should be, considering the labour spent in tracing it. But the two methods mutually check one another, and neither is to be held a complete survey of the ground.

Mr. Ruskin has used both methods in the study of the laws of Architecture; the *a priori* in parts of *The Seven Lamps*, in the first volume of *The*

*Stones of Venice*, and in the *Lectures on Architecture and Painting*. So far as these contain error of judgment, it has been caused by pushing common sense to extremes, as he himself confesses in several places. The historical method he has followed in the later volumes of *The Stones of Venice* and in parts of *The Seven Lamps*, as where he traces the development of intersecting Flamboyant mouldings. In his *Oxford Lectures* he makes more use of the historical method than in his early period; and if he had written the intended course on Architecture, we might perhaps have had this Art treated as sculpture is treated in *Aratra Pentelici*. As it is, we can gather that he regards all Art as originating from common necessities of the human body and soul, and returning to them again; so that fantastical ideals must be continually checked and limited by actual requirements, and the *a priori* standard borne forward or backward with wise generalship.

All Art begins in agriculture, and in satisfying the first needs of man by dealing with easily accessible materials—wood, stone, clay, metal, wool, and so on. While requirements are simple, and among races that are intelligent and rising, Use and Beauty go, more or less, together. When life becomes complicated, Art becomes complicated; when it is luxurious, Use and Beauty part company altogether. But when the period is run, the arts need to be recalled to their original use, in order —if for nothing else—to recover their original beauty. Hence Art in general, Architecture in particular, is founded on Political Economy, and

needs repeated contact with its parent earth to keep it in vigour (*L. A.*, Lect. iv.)

But the historical method, though it explains the strange developments and the differentiation of Use and Beauty, goes no further; it hardly gives ground of criticism, which, for present needs, we require. It explains the reason of rules and limitations of architectural design as *survivals*, tacit references to previous usage and first intentions. But the time comes when the reference is no longer conscious, not even in the shape of religious tradition, and then the peculiarities of style, which were the outcome of common sense at first, but become debased by tradition, are seen to be absurd. Common sense steps in again; *a priori* considerations evolve a new model to suit new needs.

Climate and material are, therefore, not the only, or even chief, conditions of style; nor is tradition sufficient to lay down the law. Common sense and precedent alternately react on one another. Precedent may not perpetuate an absurdity, once felt, but absurdity does not exist until it is felt.

And so the historical genesis of Architecture is not sufficient to establish its æsthetic laws, because full and ideal development was in every case checked or spoiled by human weakness, or the course of politics, or some such curious fallacy as that which led the Greeks to carry out in stone a design originally intended for wood—justifiable by precedent for them, but not for us.

103. *A priori Development of Architecture.*—In

order to give an example of pure ideal and common sense in its unchecked action, Mr. Ruskin plays with his reader a game of house-building, like that of constitution-framing in Plato's *Republic* (*S. V.*, vol. i. chaps. iii.-x.) Assuming the requirements of a not very complicated, but not insufficient, civilisation, and plenty of materials, without such special abundance as would lead to exclusive employment of any one kind; assuming also entire innocence of public taste, without prejudice or precedent in view, with no stupidity to combat or sloth; he gradually deduces a perfect style, a sort of Fairyland Gothic, the Architecture of Utopia. But he proceeds to show that a very near approach to this ideal was made in Venice at her best time; and, indeed, when one feels happy and imaginative, there seems no reason why we should not colonise Utopia. But the flesh is weak; whence the importance to Art of Political Economy and Ethics.

An ideal is none the less valuable because we cannot reach it; and this ideal of *Stones of Venice* has strongly impressed the imagination of the country. Domestic Gothic, from being almost unknown or clumsily imitated after ecclesiastical models, has become frequent and conveniently planned; so much so that fine designs are to be found in almost any street of any town, suggested originally by this book, and derived from Venetian Gothic. But Derivative Art is not Vital Art; merely to copy the design is not to produce equivalent work. The modern Gothic is Sham Art because it reproduces a plausible imitation of

the form, while the spirit is not there to reanimate it. Mr. Ruskin's intention was to set up a high ideal, and to show how nearly that ideal was reached by a nation with high capacities for other things than building,— a high ethical standard which involved the free and powerful exercise of artistic faculties by all the workmen employed, so that their art was the natural outcome of their whole being. His disappointment is that the world has "put the cart before the horse," and rests delighted with a cheap copy, bungled and blundered, of the works that should have stimulated it, not to ingenious plagiarism, but to an ampler and nobler life (*S. V.*, vol. ii. pref. 3d ed.)

104. *Architecture as a Fine Art.*— Ingenuity is the first requisite, without which no building is possible; but however clever the adaptation of plan to use, of means to end, of material to stability, and so forth, it is not reasoning power that makes Architecture a Fine Art. The mere copying of old models is Constructive Art, like the mere arrangement of a suitable, economical plan; but it is not Fine Art, which comes into being only as evidence of human emotion in doing the work (§ 15), or, as it may be otherwise stated, of affection, strongly shown and rightly placed (*S. V.*, vol. i. chap. ii.) Intellectual Art is not Fine Art; Emotional Art is "fine."

Consequently, that Architecture which is simply derivative—the reproduction or restoration or imitation of ancient work, whether classic or Gothic, is not Fine Art; neither is the building of unadorned works of utility — rows of dwelling-houses,

factories, bridges, and so on. It becomes Fine Art only when it admits, in a preponderating degree, the elements of emotional interest, Beauty and Imagination; and it is "fine" in proportion to the refinement of Beauty and Imagination displayed, not only in the architect's drawings but in the completed work (*L. A. P.*, § 60).

It can never free itself from utilitarian requirement; nor need it do so: for all Art, we have seen, is to be useful. But in a Fine Art the usefulness is not the End, it is the Use; and the End is higher than the Use (*M. P.*, vol. ii. chap. i.), even though both jump together and are popularly confounded. We may consider Architecture, as a mere Constructive Art, a parallel to engineering; or we may consider it as a Fine Art, parallel to painting; but we must be quite certain which sort of Architecture we mean. Mr. Ruskin writes of it as of a Fine Art, he does not thereby dignify all buildings with the style and title of Works of Art, nor all architects with that of artists, except in the looser and lower meaning of the term.

105. *Laws of Architecture. — The Seven Lamps* attempts to give the principal laws of building considered as a Fine Art, irrespective of adaptation to modern use and convenience. These laws are not all the same with those of Sculpture and Painting, because these latter handle their material without question of resistance to force; while Architecture must take that important modification of the conditions into account (*A. P.*, § 4). Thus we get two broad classes of Art, the one

employed in colouring or shaping its material with little or no reference to strength and stability; and the other, including all "arts and crafts," employed in "decorating useful objects"—a misleading term, suggesting that the object, a house or a tool, is made first and decorated afterwards; whereas, to be Fine Art, the object must be conceived from the beginning as useful and beautiful at the same time.

Mr. Ruskin finds, as in the general question of Beauty, that these practical laws are analogues of moral ones (*S. L. A.*, Introd.), and he groups them under seven headings, not exhaustively or of necessity, but simply to bring out that analogy: (1) *Sacrifice*, or the principle of thoroughness. (2) *Truth*, or sincerity refusing all deceits, such as misleading suggestions of structure (*e.g.* the pendants to late Gothic roofs, and the use of iron as support and not merely as cement, which is legitimate); as, again, painting imitative of material or sculpture, not being confessedly decorative; and cast or machine-made work in material that can, and ought to, be hand-worked. (3) *Power*, giving an effect of size and solemnity, which is done in judicious choice of site, and in wise arrangement of plan, so that the whole mass strikes the eye at once; and of elevation, in the disposition of light and shade in broad masses, as in painting. (4) *Beauty*, or a reference to natural forms and colours as standards of typical and vital Beauty. (5) *Life* or vitality—that is, it must be, and be seen to be, the work of men who liked what they did, worked with a will, put their heart into it, or it is Sham

Art. (6) *Memory* — that is, it should not be ephemeral—"Build nothing you can possibly help, and let no land on building leases"; but build for posterity, and preserve the monuments of the past. (7) *Obedience*, by which the author means that true vitality or originality does not consist in creating a new style, for no quite new style is possible (*T. P.*, § 101), but in developing an old one; a position illustrated in the pamphlet on the Crystal Palace, and by the remark that to perfect a style is the work of ages—Titian did not invent oil-painting (*T. P.*, § 102).

We have here suggestions of a series of principles, beginning with the intellectual and moral conditions peculiar to Architecture, and ending with æsthetic considerations which it shares in common with other Decorative Arts. Ideas of Truth and Power involve the construction and issue in differences of style; Ideas of Beauty involve the aspect and issue in questions of proportion and ornamentation.

Great Architecture, like great painting, need not be on a colossal scale, but some magnitude is generally required for the display of its capacities. The Crystal Palace is huge, but not Great Art; but, on the other hand, excessive finesse as a principle is apt to shrink into mere display of polish and cabinetmaker's precision. To get the full value of whatever size be given is the object of a good elevation; and that object is most completely attained in the Early Italian styles which provide for a massive wall with coping or machicolation, strongly traversed by arcades or varied

forms of opening, showing dark upon the surface. This feature of Romanesque Architecture is the mean between the light and shade system of Gothic, which gets dark spaces by foliations; and that of Greek, which makes its columns tell in lines of light on dark, and loses *breadth*, which in architectural design, as in painting, is the source of power and effect.

In design of lines, as distinct from chiaroscuro (which ought to be a separate and conscious aim of the architect), breadth and power are shown by squareness in general surface and rectangularity in the divisions of it (as opposed to the *features* upon it). In Greek the wall is concealed by columns; in Flamboyant and Perpendicular it is practically concealed by tracery; in Romanesque it is displayed in great part, and decorated.

The roof, which is pointed to, in the *Oxford Lectures* (*L. A*, § 122, anticipated in *L. A. P.*, § 17), as the chief feature, is not so prominently treated in *The Seven Lamps*. If "the best Architecture was but a glorified roof," then we should expect to find the construction of the roof taken as fundamental principle, as the wall is taken in *S. L. A.* The chapter treating of the roof in *S. V.* (vol. i. chap. xiii.) is slight compared with those upon other Architectural features; so that it is greatly to be regretted that Mr. Ruskin never carried out his intention of giving an Oxford course on Architecture—modifying, perhaps, or amplifying his earlier works.

106. *Styles.*—Such a series of lectures would no doubt have examined Greek Architecture with

some interest, as *Aratra Pentelici* examines Greek Sculpture. In his earlier period the author was too much engaged in preaching Gothicism against the world to pay much attention to real Greek Art; and though he expressly states that his animadversions on classicism are directed against Renaissance and modern imitation of classic models, yet there is nowhere any counterbalancing interest shown in the originals.

The usual "orders" of Classic Architecture are not respectfully treated by Mr. Ruskin, who points to the final transition of classic Art into Byzantine and Romanesque to show that there are naturally only two orders of capitals, the convex and the concave; the one Doric, developing into Romanesque, Byzantine, Norman, and Lombard; and the other Corinthian, the parent of Gothic (*S. V.*, vol. i. chap. i. § 17). To these a third may be added by a combination of both (*S. V.*, vol. i. chap. vi. § 5); but the two types are analogues, the author finds, of Discipline and Freedom respectively, and divide the world between them (read *S. V.*, vol. i. chap. xxvii.); for it is difference in temper that makes different races and ages build differently (*S. V.*, vol. i. p. 360). And so there are three main schools, illustrating three main varieties of human culture: the *Greek*, using the Lintel, least ingenious in construction, most limited in scope; in Egypt, sublime; in Greece, pure; in Roman hands, rich; in Renaissance, effeminate. Next, *Romanesque*, using the round arch, not thoroughly developed until Christian times; then differentiating into Byzantine and Lombardic, changing respectively

into Arabian Gothic and Teutonic Gothic. "Its most perfect Lombardic type is the Duomo of Pisa, its most perfect Byzantine type (I believe) St. Mark's at Venice. It perishes in giving birth to another Architecture as noble as itself." Last, *Gothic*, using the gable, springing up in an Eastern and Western School, derived from Romanesque (*S. V.*, vol. ii. p. 215). On this scheme all Architecture can be arranged, not separating classic from modern styles, as though there were no bridge between—as in schoolbooks they separate ancient and modern history; but recognising that they are based on the same laws, and at their best have some principles and points in common, of which the chief is, that both rise to their greatest height simultaneously with the art of Sculpture, decoratively treated; that both are finest when considered most distinctly as Fine Arts, and designed by artists, not mere engineers. It would have been interesting to have had an analysis of the best Greek architectural ornament—even if only of those remains which Mr. Ruskin has seen in Sicily—such as he has given of Gothic, Byzantine, and Romanesque.

But of these he has written at length, more than I could hope to condense. It must suffice to point the reader to his works, which on these subjects are lucid enough to require no comment. They ought to be read, marked, analysed, and digested in the student's notebooks. *The Seven Lamps*, and the second and third volumes of *Stones of Venice*, *Mornings in Florence*, and *St. Mark's Rest* describe the rise, greatness, and decay of the various Christian styles, especially French Gothic,

which he rates at its best in the thirteenth century, though here and there rising still higher in the fourteenth: the Byzantine, Gothic, and early Renaissance of Venice,—not the noblest of all, but the most affectionately and completely studied —the palaces and tombs of Verona; the twelfth-century Romanesque of Lucca, especially the now "restored" S. Michele; the Baptistery and Cathedral of Pisa; and, chiefest of all, the Cathedral group of Florence, with Giotto's Tower.

107. *Proportion and Decoration.*—In all these styles there are two artistic elements—proportion and ornamentation. It has been the habit of architects to rank proportion as the especially architectural mystery and method of æsthetic display. Mr. Ruskin points out that proportion is not peculiar to Architecture; it is the first foundation of all design (*L. A. P.*, Addenda). The rules usually given for good proportion are useless, because good design is like good composition in music, a thing above rules (*M. P.*, vol. ii. part i. chap. vi.) There is only one rule—have one large thing and several smaller things, or one principal and several inferior, and bind them well together; it must not be confounded with symmetry, and must be between three terms at least. Symmetry is shown in lateral arrangement in the plan, proportion in the elevation, and should vary in ascent from the base. Succession of equal things is not proportion, though repetition is sometimes effective (*S. L. A.*, chap. iv.) And yet, however well managed, proportion has little influence; it does not comfort, amuse, or inform the spectator; whereas

Architecture should use whatever power it has to please and instruct, or it is not a Fine Art (*T. P.*, §§ 103-109).

This power lies in its ornamentation by forms (sculpture) and colour; consequently, a building which is bare of ornament, however ingenious its proportions, is still only on the borderland of artistic creation. But at the same time it must be remembered that without proportion nothing further is possible. The designs of Byzantine palaces at Venice are delicately and exquisitely varied in proportion; no Architecture can be great without it; but it gives no title of itself to greatness. Even in the arrangement of the masses of light and dark, obtained by arcades, colonnades, foliations, and so on, something more than the proportion of straight lines is required. Abstract curvature, pictorial composition, at once demand the exercise of imaginative power which no rules can teach.

108. *Sculptured Ornament.*—The fallacy that a building, or any other object, can be designed in one frame of mind, and then decorated with superadded, detachable ornament in another mood, or by another person, is the cause of the comparative contempt in which decoration is held. But no Great Art is thus produced in Architecture, no more than in other departments; if the architect leans all his force on the construction, he is a builder and not an artist—a useful man, no doubt, but not a creator of Fine Art.

And in reviewing the examples of the greatest periods Mr. Ruskin finds that perfect adaptation and execution of ornament goes, as a matter of fact,

hand in hand with the best and wisest construction possible to the style. When the sculpture is best, the style is best; and this is a natural consequence of the Political Economy of Art. For it means that the workman is an artist as well as the architect, and that the public taste is highly developed and sensitive. But in times of division of labour, when the architect is a gentleman and a man of intellect, and the actual workmen are mere mechanics, there is no unity of Art, nor any unity of the resultant work, so closely do æsthetic and ethical considerations intermingle and combine.

The treatment of ornament is therefore the final and crowning virtue of Architecture, and the real difficulty of the Art, because it is not enough to insert any beautiful carving, as it is not enough to hang any beautiful painting on the walls—the ornament, to be ornament, must be designed for its place (*S. V.*, vol. i. p. 231). Mr. Ruskin has gone so far as to say that Architecture is the art of designing sculpture for building (*L. A. P.*, App. to Lect. ii.)—a statement which must be well understood and guardedly quoted, as his extreme expression of the difference between merely constructive building and Architecture as a Fine Art. The laws involved in architectural, as well as in all decorative treatment, require separate discussion, under the head of Design and Decoration, in which we shall see how Mr. Ruskin regards the question of conventionalisation and abstraction, and what he considers to be the right subject or material of ornament. Meanwhile, the principles peculiar to Architecture may be briefly summed up.

The place of carving should be that in which it is best seen—at the bottom of the building—diminishing in finish, but increasing in effect, toward the top (*L. A. P.*, § 39). It should bear close inspection (*S. L. A.*, chap. iv. Aph. 22), and no less should it have its effect when seen from afar (*T. P.*, § 125)—that is, it should be treated as an artist would treat it, giving the greatest attention and best position to the noblest subject, bringing *ex forti dulcedinem.* The proper points for emphasis by different kinds of ornament are discussed in *S. V.*, vol. i. chaps. xxii.-xxix., that is, the relation of Decoration to Construction.

109. *Ornament and Structure.*—Pugin and others held that ornament ought always to exhibit and adorn the constructive features of Architecture, an idea whose source we have traced already (§ 100) to the beginnings of Art and Civilisation. But Architecture worthy of the name arises only when the first simple culture changes into the stage when, without corruption, it becomes complicated. Like painting, which is greatest on the imminent, deadly verge of decadence, it culminates when rude and primitive simplicity has given place to more ambitious and varied detail, which became ultimately regarded as separable, and the decorator grew to be another person from the builder. Thus we get two extreme views—one that all ornament is developed construction, and the other that it has nothing to do with construction. Mr. Ruskin takes the historian's position, and shows that, as a matter of fact, in some of the finest architecture ever created, the ornament is

not structural. But on the other hand, while it *conceals*, it does not *deny*, structure; and the pendants and pliant lines of Flamboyant work are to be judged on a different footing, as denials of truth, from the marble casing of Italian buildings, which confesses its office as protector of the wall from weather, and only conceals the interior structure as the skin conceals the flesh (*V. d'A.*, § 145; *A. P.*, § 24, and elsewhere).

This marble casing has another office; it is a kind of enlarged mosaic, decorating by means of colour. The later Italians, indeed, used colour in Fresco painting freely, outside as well as inside their walls; and when done in a masterly way, with good result. But not only is Fresco liable to damage by weather, and so against the principle suggested by the "lamp of memory," but it is so supremely difficult to apply rightly that it cannot be considered among the usual methods of decoration. Mosaic and marble casing come more within the sphere of architectural possibilities (*S. L. A.*, chap. ii.; *S. V.*, vol. ii. chap. iv.), and still more easy and adaptable is the variegation of the wall by different coloured masonry laid in courses or patterns—the roughest sort of mosaic.

We have therefore two sorts of ornament—sculpture and mosaic, form and colour; and the study of Architecture is not complete until we have learned how to treat form and colour, not imitating Nature, but adorning use.

110. *Architectural Colour.*—And yet the laws of Art are best learnt from the observance of Nature; and though Architectural ornament is

not to be a congeries of imitated objects, it is to be treated as Nature would treat it. Now the colour of Nature does not emphasise the form; it ornaments the animal, or the flower, or the mountain, by partial confusion and concealment of structure. And in good Architecture the colouring should not bring out the forms, but cross them and dapple them; considering the whole building as one object, and not as an accumulation of different coloured objects.

Thus, mouldings should not be painted of different colours, nor columns striped vertically, nor the ground of sculptured reliefs coloured differently from the figures; but, as in Nature, the colour should play about the surface, interchanging and complicating the forms (*S. L. A.*, chap. iv.) And the safest and best method of colouring is that obtained in the use of variegated material, which is always delicate and varied in tint and gradation —another justification for the marble casing of the early Italians.

But if the colour is to complicate the form it should be strongest where the form is least interesting—that is, on broad surfaces—and absent where the form is in itself interesting enough to require the eye's undivided attention. So that the Sculpture of capitals and bases, of friezes and panelling, is better when no colour interferes. And this is the reason why we are more pleased with colourless Sculpture, which represents an abstraction, an idea; while the building itself, a real thing, may be as legitimately coloured as any other real thing in the world.

These principles are summed up in one paragraph (*S. L. A.*, chap. iv. § 43), which requires of Architecture "considerable size, exhibited by simple terminal lines; projection towards the top; breadth of flat surface; square compartments of that surface; varied and visible masonry; vigorous depth of shadow, exhibited especially by pierced traceries; varied proportion in ascent; lateral symmetry—Sculpture most delicate at the base, enriched quantity of ornament at the top; Sculpture abstract in inferior ornaments and mouldings, complete in animal forms, both to be executed in white marble; vivid colour to be introduced in flat geometrical patterns, and obtained by use of naturally coloured stone." And the example given of this perfect manner is Giotto's Campanile at Florence.

# CHAPTER XIV

## DECORATION

111. *The Rank of Decorative Art.*—The architect —the "artist considered as building"—in making a window may surmount it with nothing but plain stone, or he may add mouldings for the sake of beauty, or he may carve leaves and birds above it, or he may set Michelangelo's Night and Day over it in consummate sculpture. The mouldings, the leaves, and the figures are all Decorative Art. In framing a door he may panel it with oak, plain and simple, or cover it with Ghiberti's bronze; the panelling and the metal-work are both Decorative Art. In finishing a wall he may whitewash it, or paper it, or stencil it, or cover it with tapestry, or paint it in Fresco, or stretch a canvas over it with Titian's Assumption or Tintoret's Paradise. These are all stages of Decorative Art (*T. P.*, § 73). All fixed Art is decorative, however it may vary in excellence; so long as it is adapted to its position it belongs to the same class. And as it may be the finest Art in the world, Decorative Art ranks with the highest. There is no necessary inferiority in it;

the painter of easel pictures, or the modeller of portrait busts, is rated higher than the house-painter, not because he pursues a different calling, but only when he does better work—work, that is which brings out a greater sum of human capacity, bodily and spiritual.

But there is a difference between the calling of the architect or decorative craftsman and that of the painter or sculptor pure and simple. All Fine Art involves skill and beauty; but the Graphic Arts (under which term Mr. Ruskin includes sculpture as well as painting in this connection) involve skill, beauty, and likeness; while the Architectural Arts involve skill, beauty, and use.

112. *Arts and Crafts.*—The Unity of Art is a doctrine which, I believe, Mr. Ruskin was the first to teach, though it is now very generally accepted. Until lately artists were supposed to be wandering from their profession if, being portrait-painters, they attempted landscape; if, being oil-painters, they tried fresco; if, being Academicians, they painted scenes, or wrought in metal, or meddled with any of those crafts which were supposed not long since to be the monopoly of manufacture. But by this division of labour all the Arts suffered at once (*A. P.*, § 6). The professional painters lost versatility of hand and breadth of sympathy, and the trades lost the example and stimulus of imaginative work; all they could get from the artist was a design, which was always spoiled by mechanical execution. It was not so in Greece, or in the Middle Ages or

in the earlier times of the Renaissance, and it will not be so in the future.

But it does not follow from this doctrine that all crafts are alike honourable. That Art is greatest into which the most varied and highest energies are put. That is why Mr. Ruskin does not, like the Germans, rank Music as the highest Art; for in Music there is not the scope for all the powers that can be displayed in Painting, while the execution and composition of Painting employ those powers which are shown in Music. Literature, again, while it gives play to intellectual and emotional faculties, does not require the physical organisation of the painter or sculptor; all Fine Art—Graphic Art—is essentially athletic. And so there is a difference between the higher forms of decoration and the lower, in proportion as they admit the whole sum of human energy or only a part. Some are rightly called Minor Arts, because their scope is limited, whether by purpose or by material; for in every Art there are certain excellences, peculiar to it alone, arising from the very limitations which narrow its range. An Art is base unless it brings out the distinctive qualities of its material (*T. P.*, § 160); but when those qualities are such as to hamper thought or invention or representation the craft is inferior in rank to Sculpture and Painting, which, however decorative, give the freest possible play to the highest possible faculties.

113. *Technical Conditions.*—The Minor Arts may be subordinated to two great heads—Sculpture (with Engraving) and Painting. When

Sculpture uses ductile material it is *plastic*; when it uses stone (or wood or rigid metal) it is *glyptic* (*A. P.*, § 152). When Painting works in ground colours it produces fresco and all the other sorts, down to miniature and illumination of books. But it may use tiles or tesseræ or slabs of coloured stone, and then it is Mosaic of one kind or another. It may work in transparent glass, and become Glass-Painting and Staining; or it may work with coloured threads, and be Tapestry and Embroidery and the decoration of Textile fabrics. But each subordinate department has its own standards and limitations, conditioned by material. Art is one, but Arts are many.

The beauty of a clay model is not that of a carved statue, and it is a mistake to consider such a model as more than the sketch for the finished work. A sculptor ought, as of yore, to hammer the marble himself, and by so doing he would learn the capacities of it, and give life to the work, and interest beyond any that can be imparted by a mechanical workman translating his model by mechanical means (*A. P.*, § 178). The various kinds of bas-relief, and the virtues of marble as a vehicle of Figure-Sculpture, we must notice under their proper heading; but, in a word, marble admits a sharp edge and a modelled surface in a way which no other material can imitate, and this contrast of crispness and softness is the special virtue of Sculpture of the finest kind (*S. L. A.*, ch. iv. §§ 14-18). But it does not admit the strong definition of outstanding detail; it is absurd to imitate birds' nests in solid stone; a crisp edge

and an undulating surface—what more does an artist want? But the management of this material, so perfectly achieved in the architectural Sculpture of Italian Gothic, as any one knows who has studied and drawn it with care, can only be attained by practical handling of the chisel, and it will never grace the buildings of modern days until our designers themselves learn to carve with their own hands (*T. P.*, Preface). And when we remember that architectural and sculptural excellence have always gone hand in hand, we must despair of great deeds in building until the architects turn sculptors (*T. P.*, § 39),—and the philosophers kings.

Inferior stones, such as sandstone or chalk, admit deep cutting and picturesque chiaroscuro, but not the refined surface and edge (*A. P.*, § 158). Cast-metal, on the other hand, does not allow of the edge of marble, but it gives more facilities for surface than common stone; and by chasing—in which process Sculpture glides into Engraving—it can be covered with infinitely small and delicate detail. Its colour, also, is ill adapted to represent flesh, consequently the worker in metal must lean on picturesque accessories. When sheet-metal is used, it can be *repoussé* into bosses without sharp edge, and chased; or it can be cut into strips and twisted into fantastic foliations, whose delicate curves and vital beauty it is quite impossible to reproduce in cast-iron. In all cast-metal, hand-finishing is the necessary condition of vitality, though Stamping is to Sculpture what Engraving is to Painting (*A. P.*, § 157).

Most of these technical conditions are well known, and do not require illustration from Mr. Ruskin's Art-Teaching. His remarks, however, on Illuminating and Glass-Painting are not so well kept in mind as they should be. Speaking of Pen-Drawing (*L. A.*, § 143), he says: "In nothing is Fine Art more directly founded on utility than in the close dependence of Decorative Illumination on good writing. Perfect Illumination is only writing made lovely; the moment it passes into picture-making it has lost its dignity and function. . . . To make writing *itself* beautiful, to make the sweep of the pen lovely, is the true art of Illumination; and I particularly wish you to note this, because it happens continually that young girls who are incapable of tracing a single curve with steadiness, much more of delineating any ornamental or organic form with correctness, think that work, which would be intolerable in ordinary drawing, becomes tolerable when it is employed for the decoration of texts; and thus they render all healthy progress impossible, by protecting themselves in inefficiency under the shield of a good motive. Whereas the right way of setting to work is to make themselves first mistresses of the art of writing beautifully, and then to apply that art in its proper degrees of development to whatever they desire permanently to write. . . . Having done so, they may next discipline their hands into the control of lines of any length, and, finally, add the beauty of colour and form to the flowing of these perfect lines." The MSS. of Miss Alexander, the author of *The Roadside Songs of*

*Tuscany* (which Mr. Ruskin met with twelve years later), are an example of this beautiful writing in its first stage of development, and those of Mr. William Morris offer the most perfect specimens of the accomplished art.

Of Glass-Painting, which Mr. Ruskin has studied much, though he has not written what he promised about it, there is some notice in *The Two Paths.* The sum of the doctrine is, that as it is the virtue of glass to be transparent, a shaded picture in glass is barbarous (*L. A.*, § 186; *T. P.*, § 161). The variations in its local colour give all the variety of tone that it can display; but there should be no modelling of solid form, still less shadow. Its colour should be deep, mysterious, and subdued; the glass-painter's aim should not be brightness but mystery. "The value of hue in all illuminations on painted glass of fine periods depends primarily on the expedients used to make the colours palpitate and fluctuate; *inequality* of brilliancy being the *condition* of brilliancy". (*T. P.*, Appendix 5). Sir Joshua Reynolds tried to design a powerful picture for New College window, and "was grievously disappointed with the result," which had not the brilliancy of his canvas (*T. P.*, Appendix 2).

114. *Conventional Design: its Reasons.*—These technical notes are given here, not by any means as a *resumé* of the subject, but as indications of the current of our author's teaching—"straws to show how the wind blows." We learn that in Architecture, and in all the Decorative Arts, some derogation from Imitative Naturalism is inevitable,

owing to conditions of material (*T. P.*, § 78), and these conditions must be always kept in view, or there results a foolish manner of decoration parallel to vulgar deceptive imitation.

Moreover, the intention of the architect or decorator may limit his work—must do so if he is to regard its *use* rather than its representative capacity. A capital or a cornice must be a capital or a cornice, and not a bunch of leaves, frittered into fragility, or a wreath of flowers whose (stone) petals may fall with the first frost. And in decorating furniture, implements, and utensils, and so on, the use has to be borne in mind; in embroidering drapery the folding of it must be allowed for, and the figures so drawn that their effect may not be lost, but even heightened into greater richness and mystery, when it is not strained flat but hanging loose.

This decorative intention may have in view either the place or the office of the work (*T. P.*, §§ 79, 80). When it is to be seen from a distance, it must be treated accordingly; it is no merit in Architectural Sculpture to be highly "finished," so as to be visible only from a ladder. When it is to be subordinate to more completed work, as the frame to the picture, the fringe to the figure, the leafage to the statue, it is to be treated with less elaboration; but never losing the truth of natural curvature as far as the elaboration goes,—the handling or draughtsmanship in which the vitality of all work, Greek or Gothic, or what not, everlastingly consists. But to get this vitality of line and surface—indispensable to Vital Art—the

craftsman must be as good an artist as the best of them; the limitation of his powers, that "curbs his liberal hand, subservient proudly," is very different from inadequacy of power, and need never be confounded with bungling or perfunctory makeshift, nor can it ever be imitated by mechanical means or untrained hands.

It does, however, happen that in the infancy of Art, the want of technical appliances and methods has turned into this channel the energies of great genius. The very absence of freer and completer facilities for expression made early artists put all the more power into the limited scope of Decoration; and so we find the best Decoration, as such, in the ages preceding the meridian of Art. But the men who did the work were just as great men; the early masters had less knowledge but quite as great powers as the late masters, and we cannot rival them by handing over Decoration to children and incompetent workmen and steam-engines.

115. *Conventional Design: its Fallacies.*—The notion that the best Decoration is the product of incomplete, and therefore inadequate, Art, has led to the fallacy that its artistic inadequacy is its virtue; that, whereas in picture-making and architecture grand proportion and intricate composition are virtues, in decoration mere symmetry is the right principle; that colour, which must always be gradated and variegated to be good in painting, may better be flat in decoration; that form, which must have meaning when pictorial, should have none when ornamental. And on these three errors, originating in a misconception of the powers of

early designers, as well as in a misconception of the laws of all Art, our modern system of pattern-making is based. It has been strengthened in its erroneous position by the necessities of mechanism, which can reproduce flat colour, and symmetrical pattern, and nonsense form, with more ease and cheapness than beautiful colour and infinitely varied form. And so we have accustomed ourselves to a superabundance of so-called Decoration of a very low order; and the public taste, so degraded and content with itself, thinking all its geese to be swans, finds it difficult to see the virtues of the great decoration of the past or of more artistic nations. We have Turkey carpets manufactured to suit our notion of manufacture; and the vital ornament of the Middle Ages we destroy without a scruple, and replace with caricatures and clumsy copies, under the name of restoration.

But thanks to Mr. Ruskin's teaching, primarily, we are in a way to a better civilisation in this respect. The fallacies of conventionalisation are likely to be forsworn by all who pretend to a love of Art; and a truer view of the nature of ornament is gradually introducing itself. And this is a sign, not only of better things for Art, but also of better things for society; for the lower forms of conventional Decoration, based on nothing better than order, symmetry, and definition, are the marks and tokens of a low form of culture and public morality. In degraded races, or savage ones, they coexist with dissolute manners, cruelty, and tyranny; while the Decoration that is based on natural form, and

does its best with that, in its own material, is always a sign of health and vitality in the nation (*T. P.*, Lect. i.)

116. *Naturalism in Ornament.*—Abstract form is not by any means without its place in the best ornament; but it is there only as subordinate to Naturalism. In some things it is the necessary condition of material or intention—a zigzag is a better ornament to a teacup than a landscape (*T. P.*, § 76). But the billet and zigzag of Norman Architecture are not the whole of its ornament, which rises in the better examples (and more completely preserved ones everywhere) to sculpture of vegetation and figures (*T. P.*, § 33). The presence of conventionalism is no bar to great Art; but the absence of Naturalism is. All vital Art represents what its public really likes, and the best uses the best as its subject, that is, the forms of Nature, and not the spirals and zigzags of children and savages (*S. V.*, vol. i. chap. ii.) All our ideas of beauty are founded on Nature, on the visible aspects of Nature (*S. L. A.*, chap. iv.), and even in the treatment of ornament, the artistic beauty of it, in its broad and subtle undulations of surface (*L. A.*, § 166), or varieties of colour and so on, is only the reflex of its natural beauty. The highest Decoration of all ages is that which is composed of figures; the best in its kind shows the best figure-sculpture or drawing. To take an instance from a style which Mr. Ruskin does not hold up to admiration, Raphael's arabesques are better than others of the sort because he was a draughtsman of the figure, and based his patterns

on the figure. Egyptian and Greek architectural decoration, Gothic stained-glass and ornament, are all at their best when the figure is best rendered (*T. P.*, § 82; *L. A. P.*, App. to Lect. i. and ii.)

So we have a scale of ornamental subjects, increasing in value and dignity—from the abstract lines, whose originals are seen in Nature, more beautiful as they represent the higher infinite curves expressing force, or spring of vegetation, or vitality; through the simplest combinations of these lines seen in Nature in crystals, waves, and eddies, and the like; the lower shapes of organic life, shells and fish, snakes and other reptiles; the varied suggestions of the vegetable world, branches of trees, foliage, flower, and fruit; and through birds and beasts, to the human figure (*S. V.*, vol. i. chap. xx.)

117. *Abstraction.*—But this advocacy of Naturalism must not be construed into the advocacy of vulgar imitation. This question, in Decoration, is parallel with that which has (chap. iii.) been enough discussed in general terms; not deceptive imitation, but the representation and interpretation of facts, must be the aim of the decorative artist, and he must further bear in mind the limitations of his material, and the place and office of his work. This kind of conventionalism is entirely different from that which tries to cover a surface with pattern on the cheapest terms, but it is none the less conventional, and leads to a result which, by the careless and uninformed, is sometimes mistaken for the other, especially in subordinate parts.

Given the subject,—a natural form with all its

detail, texture, and colour—the problem is to transfer such of its qualities to the work as material and purpose will permit; the vital qualities first, that is, expression of character and energy, the beauty of its kind; and whatever can be superadded as accessory is of small consequence. This selection of the most important facts is Abstraction, of which the theory has been already stated (§§ 27, 34, 40-43). But there is something more, for when the facts are selected, how are they to be arranged?

The vulgar conventionalisation places them symmetrically and considers its work complete. But leaves, for example, may be regularly disposed and yet meanly imitative; they may be apparently loosely arranged, and yet well designed (*S. L. A.*, chap. iv.) It is easy to carve leaves, but not so easy to compose them; and the ultimate problem of all Decoration is that of all Art—composition, arrangement, or design, in which lies the secret of true conventionalisation.

## CHAPTER XV

### DESIGN

118. *The Necessity of Design.*—"Much that I have endeavoured to teach," says Mr. Ruskin (*L. A.*, § 166), "has been gravely misunderstood by both young painters and sculptors, especially by the latter. Because I am always urging them to imitate organic forms, they think if they carve quantities of flowers and leaves, and copy them from the life, they have done all that is needed. But the difficulty is not to carve quantities of leaves. Anybody can do that. The difficulty is, never anywhere to have an *unnecessary* leaf." And then he goes on to show by examples, as he had often shown before (*e.g.* in *L. A. P.*, § 37), that in a good design no part can be altered without injury to the rest, owing to the disposition of masses; and the curvature and surface-modelling is so managed that the look of life is given without the colour, or detail, or texture of the real thing. This is the work of *design*, as distinct from imitation, or adaptation to use; and it is present in all great Art, whether decorative or pictorial. "The noblest Art is the exact unison of the abstract

value, with the imitative power, of forms and colours; it is the noblest composition, used to express the noblest facts" (*S. V.*, vol. ii. chap. vi. § 43), though this ideal of perfection is hardly ever reached.

But design in any degree means life to the work; it means original power, creative talent. Even when the subject of the work is plagiarised, the artist makes it his own by rearranging it, by putting his own design into it (*S. L. A.*, chap. v.), and the chief objection to a weak copy of good work is that the subtleties which constitute design are missed. Design is the specially *artistic* quality, the part of formative Art which answers to musical composition, the quality which makes Fine Art a finer thing than photography or plaster-casting. It is not merely composition, or arrangement of objects in the field of vision; nor is it merely draughtsmanship of a more enthusiastic and emphatic kind, but it includes all these. It transcends rules, and yet it is the main requirement for the artist, the decorator, and the architect. How is it to be obtained?

119. *Organised Form.*—All noble design, in any kind, depends on the sculpture or painting of Organic Form (*T. P.*, Preface); not that imitation at once teaches the secrets of composition, but artistic composition is an analogy of natural grouping and growth, and can only be learnt by tracing out the analogy in habitual thought. The principle that Nature is more beautiful, is greater than Art, embraces this department of beauty and greatness too; and though Mr. Ruskin has

renounced the passages in which he calls Nature "Imaginative" (*M. P.*, vol. ii. pp. 153, 156), he has always held that "natural composition" is more perfect than artificial, since he drew his first careful and accurate study of ivy on a tree-stump in 1842.

The development of the laws of organised form and grouping is traced—none the less thoughtfully because the language is familiar—in *Laws of Fésole*, chapter v., which opens by stating, what has been stated before in Mr. Ruskin's work (*e.g. M. P.*, vol. iv. chap. xvii.), that "all beautiful lines are beautiful . . . in showing the directions in which material things may be wisely arranged or may serviceably move." Thus the curve which terminates a feather pleases us, "partly because it expresses such relation between the lengths of the filaments of the plume as may fit the feather to act best upon the air, for flight; or, in unison with other such softly inlaid armour, for covering." The simplest arrangement is the globe, as a drop of water; the aggregate of several globes clustering together can be taken as the easiest example of combinations of form, composition, or grouping. By experiment we find that some combinations please us more than others; and we find the reason why—that we naturally like things to be under law. The globes loosely arranged do not satisfy us; arranged in a square, giving only one set of relations, they please us less than the same in a rhomboidal cross, which gives two sets of relations, two laws of form, and so on. And we like the pattern best when it is set upright, because

our "feeling of the pleasantness in a group of separate (and not living) objects involves some reference to the great law of gravity." The laws of beauty, therefore, are none other than the laws of life; and "design" in Nature, or the adaptation of an organism to its circumstances, is the analogue and example of design in Art.

120. *Natural Grouping.*—So far we have considered only single figures; but by increasing the number of globes in the group, we can form *garlanded* shapes, and *stellar* shapes, based on the circle and the cross respectively; and by varying the sizes of the globes an infinite variety of figures and complex groups. "Supposing your natural taste and feeling moderately good, you will always feel some of the forms you arrive at to be pleasanter than others; for no explicable reason, but that there is a relation between their sizes and distances which satisfies you as being under some harmonious law. Three principles only you will find certain:—

"A. That perfect *dependence* of everything on everything else is necessary for pleasantness.

"B. That such dependence can only become perfect by means of *differences* in magnitude (or other qualities, of course, when others are introduced).

"C. That some kind of *balance*, or 'equity,' is necessary for our satisfaction in arrangements which are clearly *subjected to human interference.*"

These natural groups, which are neither "directly prepared for the service of man" nor arranged by man's interference—the constellations,

the rock-forms on either side of a mountain-valley, and so on—we find to be beautiful without obvious symmetry and formal design; because the sense of law and order is present in other circumstances —in their movement, if they be stars, and in their harmonious geological structure and unity of formation, if they be beds of stone. But the more nearly we approach human use and admit human interference, the more clearly we begin to prefer the palpable evidence of design—law and order. So that the early Greeks loved a formal scene (*M. P.*, vol. iii. chap. xiii.), like the mediæval landscapists; for *savage* nature was a horror to them simply because they found no law and order in it; while we, with our growing interest in Physical Science, see it as exemplifying the universal, by which alone it seems beautiful to us.

Nature, then, is beautiful, both in simple organic growths and in complex groupings, when the laws of life and cosmic order are traceable in its phenomena,—not the same laws always, but according to kind. And the more laws the more beauty.

121. *Imaginative Grouping.* — In order to express this sense of law and order, the imagination arranges the materials of Art into still more emphasised order, and subjects them to still more stringent law. If you ask any one to draw—say —the constellation of Charles's Wain, he will place the stars at equal distances, simplify the angles, and formalise the whole; merely by way of insisting on the fact of the almost uniform relations of the stars. The Greek *kymation* was an abstract

or memorandum of the law of sequence in wave-breakers; all early Art is abstract, as necessarily striving, before everything else, to express the sense of law and order.

Parallel with the love of Nature, and part and parcel with the expression of it in its sincerity, is this instinct for abstraction. We love Nature only as seeing law in it (chap. vii.), and our expression of the love of law is abstract design,—"the visible operation of human intellect in the presentation of truth, the evidence of what is properly called design or plan in the work, no less than of veracity. A looking-glass does not design—it receives and communicates indiscriminately all that passes before it; a painter designs when he chooses some things, refuses others, and arranges all" (*T. P.*, §§ 24-50, which the student should read with care).

Here we reach the same position that we have taken before, and approached from other sides, in view of the nature of Art—the reason why Photography is not Art; why mere derivative copying is not Art; why deceptive imitation is not Art; why Art deals with Beauty, and needs the work of the imagination. For Beauty is the visible law, and the Imagination is that power of the human soul which perceives it: Design is the work of the Imagination, arranging things according to law perceived; and so creating beauty. And we see why the ornament composed of mere abstract lines is lower in class than that which represents life; for the first gives fewer and less interesting statements of law; the representation of life, and especially of human life, when artistically

done, gives the most complicated and important laws.

122. *Invention.*—We get also a new and fuller meaning of the word Re-presentation, as meaning the repetition of creation, according to the laws learnt from Nature. Just as in any natural being, or group of phenomena associated in origin or function, no part can be taken away without loss and ruin, so in artistic design "selection and arrangement must have influence over everything that the Art is concerned with, great or small—over lines, over colours, and over ideas. Given a certain group of colours, by adding another colour at the side of them, you will either improve the group and render it more delightful, or injure it and render it discordant and unintelligible. 'Design' is the choosing and placing the colour so as to help and enhance all the other colours it is set beside. So of thoughts: in a good composition every idea is presented in just that order, and with just that force, which will perfectly connect it with all the other thoughts in the work, and will illustrate the others as well as receive illustration from them; so that the entire chain of thoughts offered to the beholder's mind shall be received by him with as much delight and with as little effort as possible. And thus you see design, properly so called, is human invention, consulting human capacity" (*T. P.*, § 43).

This power of design is called (*M. P.*, vol. v. part iii.) *Invention*, because it creates something which has a life of its own, and a vital power and influence. In Music a single note is merely a

noise; a tune is something which stirs the emotions, until men will live or die for it. In Painting and Sculpture the same element—musical composition, arrangement, or design—is that which gives vitality to Art. So that it matters not at all whence the materials are derived or how presented, so long as they have this vital power. The best and noblest objects merely imitated, the finest story inartistically illustrated, the purest and brightest colour inharmoniously arranged, are not Art at all; neither picturesque material nor literary subject nor any other element that goes to the making of a work of Art is of any value unless the imagination amend it by power of design, which is the invention, the creation of a living work—the making of external *objects* into *subjects* of Art.

123. *Three Stages of Design.*—The expression of the sense of law and order may be traced in three stages, which are more or less parallel to the history of Art. The first is that at which we can arrive soonest in arranging globes into simple figures; getting patterns—the Greek cross, the Latin cross, and various alternations of great and small; the circle and spiral; the zigzag and mæander, knop and flower, and so on. This, it may be remarked, was the actual beginning of Art among primitive nations, and still is seen in the first attempts of ingenious children to evolve Art for themselves when they are not set to copy. In this stage the laws expressed are very simple and obvious—symmetry and contrast, sequence and dependence. To begin thus is right; to persevere

in this rudimentary conventionalism implies a want of perception—savagery, or the indolence of worn-out intellect as seen in the decay of races, as we have already noticed.

The next stage is the attempt at naturalistic draughtsmanship, illustrating the laws of growth, —radiation and infinite curvature; the laws of life—gravity, and energy of springing lines; and all the other natural laws which condition action and passion, circumstance, colour, and so on. This in history is abstract Art to begin with, when the development is proceeding normally and healthily; it becomes in time complete Naturalism, and, misdirected, begets deceptive imitation.

The third stage is complete design, pictorial composition, and decorative invention; combining the first two stages, binding them together into unity. But when this has been practised for a while, the natural indolence of artists tempts them to find a short-cut to the production of its effects —an easier way than the exercise of Imagination. And so they try to formulate Rules for composition, forgetting that the essence of Imagination is that it is not Reason. To apply Rules is the work of deductive reasoning; to invent is the work of Imagination set free from deductive reasoning. Therefore all Rules for composition are snares and pitfalls for the artist; and they are the main cause of the production of Sham Art.

124. *Rules of Composition.*—The laws of the first and rudimentary stage of design are popularly supposed to be applicable as Rules for all design,

of which an amusing illustration is given in *The Two Paths* (§§ 84-86). Contrast, series, and symmetry are applied to very unpromising materials —a blot and a set of numerals and a grotesque figure—and result in the design of a "choice sporting neckerchief." On which the author remarks that these Rules are not by any means all that have gone to the making of the design. How was the number of figures determined? How was the breadth of the border and relative size of the numerals fixed? How was the number of bounding lines decided? Why were any inserted? What conditioned the placing of anything? All these questions can be answered only by a reference to the mysterious power of imagination, working unconsciously, and left totally unexplained by any formulæ. And when all was done, these Rules, working their best with such material, produced but an ugly result. For "the nobler the materials, the less their symmetry is endurable;" "whenever the materials of ornament are noble they must be various, and repetition of parts is either the sign of utterly bad, hopeless, and base work, or of the intended degradation of the parts in which such repetition is allowed, in order to foil others more noble."

"If designing *could* be taught, all the world would learn, as all the world reads or calculates. But designing is not to be spelled nor summed." And if the decorative arrangement in one of the minor crafts is unteachable, then how much more so is the composition of a picture or the design of a statue? Some of the principles which

are illustrated in existing works of Art can be analysed, but not as being examples for reproduction. That this is the case is seen from the popular contrasts between the words artistic and artificial, genius and ingenuity, art and artifice, artist and artisan. And there could be no greater error than that into which some of Mr. Ruskin's disciples have occasionally fallen of using the Laws of Design, as analysed by him in *The Elements of Drawing*, for Rules by which they were to concoct pictures which should satisfy their misunderstood master.

125. *Laws of Composition.*—From these laws, however, many hints may be gained, especially useful in observing Nature and studying works of Art; and it is to be regretted that the book which contains them is out of print, and inaccessible to the ordinary reader. The late Mrs. Ewing said (I forget in what publication) that it taught her much in the way of literary composition—the art of putting together a story, in which she was more than most of our time proficient; and it is curious, as a mere by-thought, to note that the title and motto of her most popular work occurs in the preface (E.D.)—"to sit like a jackanapes, never off." There are nine laws given in *The Elements of Drawing*, and discussed at length with illustrations and examples.

(1) *Principality.*—There must be a chief object in a picture, to which the others point or lead, as shown in Turner's Coblentz. This law, however, is not to be too strongly insisted upon, to the exclusion of others; for in much good Art

the dominance of the principal object is so veiled —*artis celare artem*—that it is hardly perceptible.

(2) *Repetition.*—The doubling of objects gives quietude; symmetry gives solemnity. But it must be balanced, not formal, symmetry in landscape. The exaggeration of this principle leads to that school of painting which is caricatured and criticised in *The Art of England* (p. 220)—the "French emotional landscape," with its stagnant reflections and amorphous stolidity.

(3) *Continuity*—as in succession of pillars or promontories or clouds, involving change and relief, or else it would be mere monotonous repetition.

(4) *Curvature.*—All beautiful objects are bounded by infinite curves; that is to say, lines of infinitely changing direction (*M. P.*, vol. iv. pp. 270-291); or else made up of an infinite number of subordinate curves.

(5) *Radiation*—illustrated in leaves and boughs, and in all the structure of organic bodies. In pictorial composition the analogue of Nature is found in the radiating lines which point to the principal objects, as already shown in Turner's Coblentz.

(6) *Contrast*—of shapes, of substance, of general lines—being the complement of the law of Continuity, and valuable only in that connection. The strong contrast of chiaroscuro, which is the only law exemplified in some modern pictures which "tell in exhibitions," is not enough, alone, to create great Art.

(7) *Interchange*—as in heraldic quartering. This was Prout's especial notion when he came to

lay down, as he thought, the laws by which he worked. A valuable principle; but, like the rest, only one of many.

(8) *Consistency*, or Breadth; overriding petty contrast, and giving effect of aggregate colour or form, relieved by few contrasts, and those not necessarily violent. In Architecture, power is shown by breadth of mass in the great works of the Romanesque and Gothic ages (*S. L. A.*, chap. iii.) In Sculpture, it is the especial virtue of marble to offer facilities for broad undulations of surface, contrasted with crisp edge. And in Painting, every artist knows the value of breadth, though so few attain it. It is especially characteristic of the greater masters, as indicating grasp of the subject, when joined with delicacy (Turner's earliest water-colours may be identified, almost with certainty, by their broadly gradated skies).

(9) *Harmony.*—Art is an *abstract* of Nature, at its best; and it must therefore be harmoniously abstracted. The tone of Nature's light and dark cannot be rendered; therefore all the tones in a picture must be treated so as to get a gradual series from high light to deep shadow. In Landscape by daylight it is necessary to deepen rather than to brighten the tones, in order to preserve their relative general effect; and it is best to deepen the tints gradually as they become lighter, consistently subduing the brighter more and more, and retaining as much of the difference between the lower tones as may be; or else the violent masses of dark occur over large parts of the picture, which are criticised in *Modern Painters* as

the defect of Gaspar Poussin and the older landscapists. But this treatment of tones is at the discretion of the artist. Mr. Ruskin prefers that which Turner adopted; but the best in this kind are but shadows. To gain in colour what is lost in tone is the secret of Venetian Art, which deepens its shadow not with gray or brown, but with local colour. Besides harmony of colour, there is harmony of manipulation and treatment; "depending on the draughtsman's carrying everything he draws up to just the balancing and harmonious point, in finish and colour and depth of tone, and intensity of moral feeling, and style of touch, all considered at once; and never allowing himself to lean too emphatically on detached parts, or exalt one thing at the expense of another, or feel acutely in one place and coldly in another" (*E. D.*, p. 320).

"I have now stated," the author continues, "all the laws of composition which occur to me as capable of being illustrated or defined; but there are multitudes of others which, in the present state of my knowledge, I cannot define, and others which I never hope to define; and these the most important, and connected with the deepest powers of the art. . . . The best part of every great work is always inexplicable; it is good because it is good. . . . But though you cannot explain them, you may always render yourself more and more sensitive to these higher qualities by the discipline which you generally give to your character. . . . Simplicity of life will make you sensitive to the refinement and modesty of scenery, just as inordinate

excitement and pomp of daily life will make you enjoy coarse colours and affected forms. Habits of patient comparison and accurate judgment will make your art precious, as they will make your actions wise; and every increase of noble enthusiasm in your living spirit will be measured by the reflection of its light upon the works of your hands."

# CHAPTER XVI

## SCULPTURE

126. *Plastic and Glyptic.*—Hitherto we have regarded Sculpture as an architectural decoration, as indeed it is; for its greatest works, the Elgin Marbles and the statues of the Medici Chapel, are strictly decorative, though not subordinate to the Architecture they adorn. And even in monumental Sculpture the statue cannot be designed without its pedestal and surroundings; it is fixed Art, and therefore decorative. But its qualities and conditions we can consider separately; starting from and expounding the definition of it as "the Art which, by the musical disposition of masses, imitates everything of which the imitation is justly pleasant to us, and does so in accordance with structural laws, having due reference to the materials employed" (*A. P.*, § 26).

The Imagination in Sculpture has no aid from chiaroscuro or colour, and yet it is capable of expressing the highest range of thought, as Michelangelo said (*M. P.*, vol. ii., p. 178). It ranks, with Painting, as the highest of the Fine Arts, in virtue of its expressional power, and of its demands

upon the whole nature and highest faculties of the artist—physical, emotional, and intellectual.

There are two main divisions of Sculpture, considered in relation to the material employed. *Plastic* Art is properly that which models a soft mass, such as clay or wax or molten or ductile metal and glass. *Glyptic* is the correct word for the carving of stone (and chasing of rigid metal). "Sculpture in clay will accordingly include all cast brickwork, pottery, and tilework—a somewhat important branch of human skill. Next to the potter's work you have all the arts in porcelain, glass" (exclusive of stained-glass windows), "enamel, and metal—everything, that is to say, playful and familiar in design, much of what is most felicitously inventive, and, in bronze or gold, most precious and permanent. Sculpture in stone, whether granite, gem, or marble, while we accurately use the general term 'glyptic' for it, may be thought of with, perhaps, the most clear force under the English word 'engraving'; for from the mere angular incision which the Greek consecrated in the triglyphs of his greatest order of Architecture, grow forth all the arts of bas-relief, and methods of localised groups of sculpture connected with each other and with Architecture; as, in another direction, the arts of engraving and woodcutting themselves" (*A. P.*, §§ 153, 154).

From the foregoing general principles of Art it is to be assumed that we accept these four general laws of Sculpture (*A. P.*, § 155):—

"(1) That the work is to be with tools of men.

"(2) That it is to be in natural materials.

"(3) That it is to exhibit the virtues of those materials, and aim at no quality inconsistent with them.

"(4) That its temper is to be quiet and gentle, in harmony with common needs, and in consent to common intelligence."

The virtues of clay and metal, as materials for Sculpture, have been noticed, and those of various kinds of stone hinted (§ 112), and the conclusion that important carving in Architecture is to be done in white marble (§ 109) has cleared the way for a special consideration of the various forms in which white marble may be wrought, in accordance with our definition and general laws of Sculpture. That such a stone exists, and has been found accessible and plentiful in those countries where the genius to work it was most distinctly developed, is one of the fortunate coincidences or providences of history; if the only available stone had been speckled, "the Venus de' Medici would have looked like some exquisitely graceful species of frog" (*M. P.*, vol. iv. p. 113). The fact that the Greeks had the stone did not make them sculptors, but it enabled them to become sculptors; because it is the most perfect material for the most perfect work in this kind, with the right luminosity, suggestive of ideal flesh—not opaque like chalk, but not wholly transparent, lending itself to broad undulating surface and crisp edge, and improving rather than deteriorating with age. It is not only a fine material for Sculpture but also for building; and the hewn blocks of the wall or voussoirs of the arch can, if truly laid, be carved upon just as canvas is painted upon.

127. *Incision.*—Sculpture intended for distant ornament—which in bad styles is finished as if it were meant to be seen near, and is consequently invisible—was done by the early Gothic architects, and by the Romans before them, in a kind of sketching or etching, which used the chisel as a pen and the white marble surface as paper (*S. V.*, vol. i. chap. xxi. § 23). This is the simplest kind of Sculpture, and perfectly right when rightly used —that is, for distant effect; simple incision of lines, a magnified engraving, glyptic in the first degree.

By clearing away the space around the figure a low relief is obtained, after the manner of the Egyptians. The figure stands up, not with any play of surface, but simply as a table-land above a plain. And as there is no surface to be confused by colour, colour may be legitimately applied to this rudimentary bas-relief (*A. P.*, §§ 159-163). This stage of Sculpture resembles wood-engraving; and the mere fact of its resemblance to any other Art shows that the virtues of the material are not yet brought out in their specific excellence; for the rule of Art is, "I can, therefore I ought."

But the Incision is one of the possibilities of Sculpture; and before going further it must be fixed on the mind that, just as Incision without surface is not all that marble can give, so surface without Incision is not all that it can give. Because surface is so noble a thing it is dwelt upon too often, to the exclusion of edge, and consequent loss of contrast and vitality. And this is especially the case when a clay model is made and the marble reproduced mechanically from it. Plastic

Sculpture is one thing; glyptic is another: plastic leans on the surface alone; glyptic on both surface and incision. And the full virtues of the marble are only learnt by actual experience of it, and only developed by the artist's hand working directly upon it.

The "table-land" relief, for the third stage, may have its edges rounded away, with more or less steepness, and this being done we get the conditions of true bas-relief.

128. *Surface.*—The moment that the edges are rounded away the surface of the figure becomes important, and Sculpture begins to take its proper place as a distinct Art. For though the modelling may be represented in Painting or Engraving, it is made—created—in Sculpture; whose conception is therefore the production of surface, and the beauty so obtained, irrespective of imitation (*A. P.*, § 20). The special skill and knowledge of the sculptor is that of the relation between outline and the solid form it limits, always in three dimensions (*A. P.*, § 15). The design required in Sculpture is that of disposition of *masses*, that is, beautiful surfaces—not flat but modelled spaces—bounded by beautiful lines. And when this is well done it is known at any distance, even when the imitative meaning of it is unperceived, for good surface (*A. P.*, § 22) a pleasant bossiness or roundness. In Nature this is seen in the delicately varied modelling of hills at a distance seen in lateral sunshine; in the undulations of leaves, the rounding of fruits; and especially in the smooth rise and fall of the human limbs, in

which there is never a square inch of absolute flatness. The beginner in Art, without special artistic faculties, is apt to neglect this, and to lean upon outline or violent projection, or the picturesque light and dark of flat objects relieved against one another. The amateur woodcarver, for instance, can stab out his pattern and gouge out his strap ornament long before he rises to a sense of the beauty of modulation, the "magnificent come-and-go" of surface. But this is the peculiar virtue of Sculpture in any material.

To get surface with the maximum of meaning and at the same time the minimum of depth is the problem of bas-relief proper; and it was achieved most completely by the delicate art of the Florentines, who could "carve Madonna and Child, rolling clouds, flying angels, and space of heavenly air behind all, out of a film of stone not the third of an inch thick at the thickest."

129. *Bas-Relief.*—"The true law of bas-relief is to begin with a depth of incision proportioned justly to the distance of the observer and the character of the subject, and out of that rationally determined depth, neither increased for ostentation of effect nor diminished for ostentation of skill, to do the utmost that will be easily visible to an observer, supposing him to give an average human amount of attention, but not to peer into, or critically scrutinise, the work. . . . Suppose that depth fixed; then observe what a pretty problem, or, rather, continually varying cluster of problems, will be offered to us. You might at first imagine that, given what we may call our scale of solidity,

or scale of depth, the diminution from Nature would be in regular proportion; as, for instance, if the real depth of your subject be, suppose, a foot, and the depth of your bas-relief an inch, then the parts of the real subject, which were six inches round the side of it, would be carved, you might imagine, at the depth of half an inch, and so the whole thing mechanically reduced to scale. But not a bit of it." And taking a Greek coin representing a quadriga the author shows that the great designer "made the near leg of the off horse project much beyond the off leg of the near horse; and has put nearly the whole depth and power of his relief into the breast of the off horse, while for the whole distance from the head of the nearest to the neck of the other he has allowed himself only a shallow line, knowing that, if he deepened that, he would give the nearest horse the look of having a thick nose, whereas, by keeping that line down, he has not only made the head itself more delicate, but detached it from the other by giving no cast shadow, and left the shadow below to serve for thickness of breast, cutting it as sharp down as he possibly can, to make it bolder" (*A. P.*, §§ 169, 170).

"The questions involved by bas-relief are of a more curious and amusing kind (than in solid statuary), requiring great variety of expedients, though none except such as a true workmanly instinct delights in inventing and invents easily." So far of bas-relief, pure and simple, such as can be shown in coins.

130. *Undercutting.*—But in Marble Sculpture the facilities for incision suggest an expedient for

getting relief other than that of a simply terminated surface. It is possible to hollow the edge beneath, and so increase the sharpness of the shadow to any degree up to blackness. Mr. Ruskin's paragraph on undercutting is so much more lucid and terse than anything I could write, that the reader will be glad to have it in his own words, which perhaps may encourage him to refer with added interest to the fine course of lectures from which they are taken (*A. P.*, § 174).

"Since the darkness and extent of shadow by which the Sculpture is relieved necessarily vary with the depth of the recess, there arise a series of problems, in deciding which the wholesome desire for emphasis by means of shadow is too often exaggerated by the ambition of the sculptor to show his skill in undercutting. The extreme of vulgarity is usually reached when the entire bas-relief is cut hollow underneath, as in much Indian and Chinese work, so as to relieve its forms against an absolute darkness; but no formal law can be given; for exactly the same thing may be beautifully done for a wise purpose by one person, which is basely done, and to no purpose, or to a bad one, by another. Thus the desire for emphasis itself may be the craving of a deadened imagination, or the passion of a vigorous one; and relief against shadow may be sought by one man only for sensation, and by another for intelligibility. John of Pisa undercuts fiercely, in order to bring out the vigour of life which no level contour could render. The Lombardi of Venice undercut delicately, in order to obtain beautiful lines, and edges

of faultless precision; but the base Indian craftsmen undercut only that people may wonder how the chiselling was done through the holes, or that they may see every monster white against black.

"Yet here again we are met by another necessity for discrimination. There may be a true delight in the inlaying of white on dark, as there is a true delight in vigorous rounding. Nevertheless the general law is always that the lighter the incisions and the broader the surface the grander, *cæteris paribus*, will be the work."

131. *Kinds of Relief.*—The conception of Architectural Relief-Sculpture involves two things—the protection of the ornament from weather and transverse blows, and the preservation of the constructive strength of the piece of wall so ornamented. To get the first result every relief, whether flat or round, must be within its panel-frame, and not rising above the level of the exterior moulding. To get the second result, wherever the wall space so ornamented must bear great weight or otherwise offer strong resistance, the relief must be low to avoid weakening the stone by cutting too much away; but in places where so much strength is not needed (as in the pediment) the relief may be deeper. (This is often a merely apparent relation to the actual construction, but the effect on the eye and the mind is the subject of artistic law. And it may be added that this law explains the discomfort we feel when figures in the round are attached to a wall, projecting from it, and not under cover of a niche, or panel-frame, or cornice.)

There are therefore four kinds of relief, distinguished not merely by the differences of their depth, but by management of incision and surface.

(1) Flat Relief—where portions of the surface are absolutely flat, and the expression depends greatly on the lines of its outer contour and fine incisions within them.

(2) Round Relief—if every portion of the surface be rounded, but none undercut, as in Greek coins and seals.

(3) Edged or Foliate Relief—if any part of the edges be undercut, but the general projection of solid form reduced—the parts of the design overlapping each other in places like the edges of leaves.

(4) Full Relief—if the statue be completely solid in form and unreduced in retreating depth of it, yet connected locally with some definite part of the building so as to be still dependent on the shadow of its background and direction of protective line (*A. P.*, §§ 175, 176).

This full relief—alto-relievo—is the manner of the pedimental sculptures of the Parthenon, which indeed are separable from their architectural setting, and capable of being viewed as free statuary; but intended originally as ornament, and to be seen from one side only in their designed position.

132. *Statuary.*—Of the free statue there are two varieties—the Classic and the Gothic: the first derived from the portrait of the Divinity in its shrine, orginally part of an architectural design; though not a bas-relief, akin to one; and the

other from the recumbent effigy on the "hog-backed" tomb of our Teutonic ancestors, connected in origin with monumental brasses and low reliefs, and gradually becoming the image of one lying dead. Of this kind, in its highest development, the finest example is the Ilaria di Caretto of Quercia, in Lucca Cathedral, already mentioned as the first great work of Gothic sculpture which Mr. Ruskin studied. He has described it with admiration more than once (*M. P.*, vol. ii. p. 68, and 1883 Epilogue, and again in *The Three Colours of Pre-Raphaelitism*, *Old Road*, § 249). There is a plaster cast of it in the South Kensington Museum, but any one who has seen the original, defaced though it be with discoloured but still translucent and living marble, in its quiet corner in the church, cannot fail to feel the inadequacy of the best mechanical appliances to reproduce Great Art.

Of the free statue, properly so called, Mr. Ruskin rates Verrochio's equestrian portrait of Bartolommeo Colleone as the highest example (*S. V.*, vol. iii. chap. i. § 22). In former times, when he gave in to the general admiration of Michelangelo, he wrote fine passages on the Bacchus, the Pietàs of Genoa and Florence, and the Medici Chapel (*M. P.*, vol. ii. pp. 180, 201). But even then he found the Apollo Belvedere unspiritual (*M. P.*, vol. ii. p. 215, note), and felt that its beauty was palpable to any fine lady or gentleman, and did not rank with the higher reaches of imagination (*M. P.*, vol. iii. p. 69). He criticised the Laocoon as wanting in repose

and imaginative conception (*M. P.*, vol. ii. p. 67), and for mere beauty he has said that the Venus of Melos is surpassed by many a living English girl.

The difficulties involved in this manner of work are so many and so great—surpassing those of bas-relief—that it is no wonder if perfection, complete enough to satisfy a high ideal, is seldom found. "Considerations of weight in mass, of balance, of perspective and opposition in projecting forms, and of restraint for those which must not project, such as none but the greatest masters have ever completely solved, and they not always; the difficulty of arranging the composition so as to be agreeable from points of view on all sides of it, being itself arduous enough" (*A. P.*, § 172).

133. *The Vices of Sculpture.*—As a substitute for legitimate artistic ideals in so difficult a task the sculptor is tempted to try sensational effects by means of picturesque Realism and Colour. Statuary, if it hold its proper place and function in the scale of Art, is the representation of an idea and not the creation of a thing. As an idea it is abstract, and anything that tends to confuse it with real object is a mistake. Picturesqueness, accessory, deceptive imitation, easily degenerate into waxwork, and even when kept within limits trench on the boundary of painting, and defy the law of technical conditions.

Marble is essentially a material adapted to broad surface and edge, but not to anything like fibrous structure or texture; and therefore to represent hair, lace, the material of drapery, birds'

nests, or any kind of realistic detail, is to refuse the great virtues of the material and the high possibilities of the art for the sake of something lower, and the gaping wonderment of a thoughtless mob. It is possible to imitate some things, but they are only those which are less noble and worthy of imitation—the scales of a fish, not the hair of an Apollo (*A. P.*, § 140), of which the sculptor can give the grace, flow, and feeling, but not the texture and division (*M. P.*, vol. ii. p. 200).

And the virtue of Sculpture being in its form, anything that confuses that form is a vice. Now colour, to be good, must not bring out form (ante, § 110), but confuse it; it is so in Nature and in Painting, and if Sculpture were properly tinted it would lose the best thing it has to give. In a lower class of subjects, appealing to the lower classes of the public, coloured Sculpture may be possible; but the nobler the subject the less it requires colour—the less it is possible to apply the colour finely enough to meet the requirements both of the sculptor and the colourist (*A. P.*, § 140). The fact that the Greeks and Mediævals coloured their sculpture is explained by Mr. Ruskin as a survival of barbarism, and a concession to popular ideas. Gilding is sometimes used by the early Renaissance sculptors without offence, but the Robbia ware, when coloured, is always inferior on that account. "If we could colour the Elgin Marbles with the flesh-tint of Giorgione, I had rather not have it done" (*M. P.*, vol. ii. p. 195).

134. *The Virtues of Sculpture.*—Great Sculpture is therefore colourless; the best is done in pure white marble, and shows the character of its material in breadth of surface, undulating and subtly modelled, and in crispness and vigour of incision. These qualities cannot be had except by the direct work of the artist upon his block of marble, and the vitality of a work of Sculpture is, like that of any other Art, in proportion to the evidence of human feeling displayed in it.

It results that execution is an important element in this as in all other work; handling in marble is as great as in oil-painting (*L. A. P.*, § 40). The strong execution of Michelangelo, which makes his work living and interesting compared with that of the average modern sculptor, is the outcome of clearness of conception; and though he could finish highly, his power is most evident in his sketches (*M. P.*, vol. ii. pp. 181, 182). "A great sculptor uses his tool exactly as a painter his pencil, and you may recognise the decision of his thought and glow of his temper no less in the workmanship than the design. The modern system of modelling the work in clay, getting it into form by machinery and by the hands of subordinates, and touching it at last, if, indeed, the (so-called) sculptor touch it at all, only to correct their inefficiencies, renders the production of good work in marble a physical impossibility. The first result of it is that the sculptor thinks in clay instead of marble, and loses his instinctive sense of the proper treatment of a brittle substance. The second is that neither he nor the public

recognise the touch of the chisel as expressive of personal feeling or power, and that nothing is looked for except mechanical polish" (*A. P.*, § 178, written twenty-one years ago).

Since Sculpture represents an idea, it does not deal with the realism of the picturesque. It cannot, like Painting, render accessories, details, rags or finery. It may render a figure naked, but not disorderly or gaily dressed. If draped, the drapery must be simple and severe, and any ornament strictly subordinated to the intent and character of the figure. "The proper subject of Sculpture is the spiritual power seen in the form of any living thing, and so represented as to give evidence that the sculptor has loved the good of it and hated the evil" (*A. P.*, § 115). And to conclude a chapter of excerpts, not, I hope, in this case misrepresenting the author's teaching, let us read the conclusion of his fourth lecture. "Ultimately, I do not doubt that you will rest satisfied in these following conclusions:—

"(1) Not only Sculpture, but all the other Fine Arts, must be for the people.

"(2) They must be didactic to the people, and that as their chief end. The Structural Arts, didactic in their manner; the Graphic Arts, in their matter also (but see above, §§ 81, 82).

"(3) And chiefly the great Representative and Imaginative Arts—that is to say, the Drama and Sculpture—are to teach what is noble in past history, and lovely in existing human and organic life.

"(4) And the test of right manner of execution

in these Arts, is that they strike, in the most emphatic manner, the rank of popular minds to which they are addressed.

"(5) And the test of utmost fineness in execution in these Arts is that they make themselves be forgotten in what they represent, and so fulfil the words of their greatest master, '*The best in this kind are but shadows.*'"

# CHAPTER XVII

## ENGRAVING

135. *The Definition.*—The incised contour-line of rudimentary Sculpture is the origin also of Engraving and Drawing. The thin furrow that emphasised the masses of barbaric bas-relief could be imitated on the early Greek vase, while the clay was wet, with the stylus-point; or on the parchment of the manuscript by the silver-point of the scribe. As the sculptor used his chisel for a pen, so the draughtsman used his pen for a chisel—there was no difference in the original conception of the two Arts; they only gradually differentiated. And so we get an Art midway between Sculpture and Painting, which glides into both on its borderlands. Like Sculpture it begins with contour, and gradually adds surface-modelling; like Painting it takes account of cast shadow, and, in some cases, of the values of tone, the effect of the depth of local colour in diminishing light.

But this Art is broadly divided into Engraving and Drawing; and the distinction is a question of some interest, now that means of reproduction have been invented and perfected, tending to

confuse or even identify the two. We have already admitted that an Art, to be at its best, must express the virtues of its material,—it must accept technical conditions, and by human skill and human hand-work make the best of them.

It is commonly thought that the essence of Engraving is in its power of reproduction by printing, but that is only an accident. Lithography is not Engraving; but the carving of seals is, though no black and white print is taken from them (*A. F.*, § 9); as also *niello*, in which there is no question of reproduction. Even mezzotint, which proceeds by effacing the ground its incisions have created, needs that process as a preliminary; it is an art of scratching or cutting, and it is often associated with an etched outline. Consequently, the faculty of reproduction is not the first element in Engraving, but the fact that it is cut-work. Engraving is good, not in proportion to its adaptation to the printing-press, but in proportion as it exhibits the workman's mastery over the hard metal into which he engraves (*A. F.*, § 17).

Drawing, on the other hand, does not cut into its material, but lays pigment upon it. The laws of the two Arts will therefore differ as their technical conditions differ; and the attempt to confuse them is an error, denying the main principles of Art, and tending to create a sham. Drawings, if reproduced by processes, must be still drawings, and exhibit the manner of work on paper. Engravings must be always engravings, and exhibit the limitations imposed by the steel or wood. Perfect reproduction of drawings which

are perfect in their own kind is impossible, whether it be attempted by the best possible mechanical processes or the best possible engravers. The precise qualities which drawing can give, in which the drawing is especially beautiful and valuable, are alien to any sort of engraving. The precise qualities which make engraving right and interesting are those which are not wanted in drawing. This must be clearly understood by the student and the critic as the fundamental condition of all appreciation of black and white—the better the drawing, the more hopeless it is to get it engraved or reproduced in any way. Experience with the best engravers and the most ingenious process-printers has led me to the conviction that a drawing, say, by Ruskin, simply cannot be reproduced except in its lower and less artistic qualities: the subtler points of emphasis and tone, of quality and modelling, and even (whenever hand-work is used) of actual form and curvature, are lost or confused, until the plate becomes—to any one who really cares for the refinement of the original—misleading; and when refinement is the chief feature in the draughtsman's work, any reproduction is a libel. As engraving, a plate may be miraculous; as reproduction, monstrous, because the "lie that is half a truth is ever the worst of lies." No artist or person with artistic taste who gives a thought to the question cares for reproductive engraving or etching, except on the ground of its originality as a translation from colour into chiaroscuro, from paint into ink, and from draughtsman's handling to engraver's. Consequently, and *a*

*fortiori*, since it does not attempt to *translate* but to *facsimile*, mechanical reproduction is not an artistic process; although it was hoped at one time by Mr. Ruskin that it might become so (*L. A.*, § 10), as he hoped, on the invention of Daguerreotype, that Photography would supersede all the lower forms of objective painting. But the principles of Art Philosophy are too well based to be upset by an invention.

136. *Line.*—The relation of Nature to Art is, however, constant, whatever be the material employed to translate it; and though the kind of line drawn by the draughtsman be different from that cut by the engraver, it must be either part of the outline, or part of the texture, or part of the shading of the subject represented.

Outline is an abstraction; it does not exist, as such, in Nature. It is only our manner of marking off one mass of colour from those masses which surround it in the field of vision; it is a translation of an idea into a thing. Sometimes there are dark lines round the masses we see in Nature, as round cumulus clouds, or limbs foreshortened, owing to the strengthening by perspective of a non-luminous envelope surrounding a luminous body—the hair on an arm, or the outer mist on a cloud; this is not true outline, but modelling. The true outline is in Nature a geometrical line—the locus of a point; impalpable, but usually quite definite; not an object, but a situation: "Infinitely subtle—not even a line, but the place of a line, and that, also, made soft by texture. In the finest painting it is therefore

slightly softened; but it is necessary to be able to draw it with absolute sharpness and precision" (*L. A.*, § 130).

Engraving begins in outline; and as long as it does outline it must keep to the laws of outline, which, as it is abstract, intellectual, conventional, must not be confused with other uses of the black stroke which is called a line in Art. "Always conventional, it is to be sustained throughout in the frankness of its conventionalism; it no more exists in Nature as a visible line, at the edge of a rose-leaf near, than of a ridge of hills far away. Never try to express more by it than the limitation of forms; it has nothing to do with their shadows or their distances" (*L. F.*, chap. viii. § 17). A pure outline is therefore the preparation for painting. In Engraving it is rarely seen. The so-called outline engravings are usually an attempt to suggest shadow and projection, and fail in being interesting because they do not, on the one hand, give as much shadow and projection as a little more work and franker sketching would give; nor do they, on the other hand, dwell on the beauty of contour and harmony of pure form enough to justify the highly abstract manner of their treatment.

But although the outline does not exist in Nature it does in Art; and when it is accepted as an aim in itself it may be beautifully used, as in decorative work and in glass-painting. The pleasure derived from such work is of an intellectual nature; it is like that of musical composition, divested of imitation—design pure and simple. But for this

reason it cannot be a popular thing; it is not sensational, and very slightly representative, and yet it is the first test of high artistic feeling, and the last power that the young student or amateur can hope to attain. Whenever it is found in perfection it marks a high standard of perception and development in the artistic nature and work of the nation or individual producing it. The first requirement, it is the last accomplishment of Art.

137. *Linear Texture.*—The second use of line is in expressing texture of a fibrous sort, produced by filaments or threads, as in feathers, fur, hair, and woven or reticulated tissues. "A vast quantity of the Art of all ages depends for a great part of its power on texture produced by multitudinous lines. Thus, wood-engraving, line-engraving properly so called, and countless varieties of sculpture, metalwork, and textile fabric, depend for great part of the effect, for the mystery, softness, and clearness of their colours or shades, on modification of the surfaces by lines or threads. . . . The earliest Art in most countries is linear, consisting of interwoven, or richly spiral, and otherwise involved arrangements of sculptured or painted lines, on stone, wood, metal, or clay" (*L. A.*, §§ 135-137).

When lines are thus used they are no longer abstract, but representative of actual dark elongated narrow spaces in the field of vision. To anticipate a little,—for the cross-divisions of so complicated a subject make it difficult to proceed with absolute sequence and symmetry,—when lines are used for shading they, again, do not represent

actual objective facts *as* lines; they are grouped together to produce an aggregate of darkness. So we have three uses of the line: First, abstract, as standing for limitation; second, concrete, as standing for texture fibres; third, abstract, as forming a part of shading. The outline is, therefore, to be regarded as intellectual, and to behave as such. The line used for texture is actual, and is to be treated as a source of decorative material —thickened and thinned, curved and radiated, arranged to express surface and solidity, following the shape of the object. The line used for shading is different from this, and, whether curved or straight, is simply and solely a part of the woven tone; it must not pretend to model the surface except by gradation of tone.

138. *Curvature.*—Both the outline and the line expressing texture represent the forms of Nature which owe their beauty in great part to their curvature. Straight or rugged lines are necessary to the beauty of Nature, just as darkness is to light, but are not themselves beautiful. Any curve is more beautiful than any straight line; but some curves are more beautiful than others, namely, infinite more beautiful than finite curves; and those which suggest the quickest attainment of infinity are the most beautiful. For example, a circle, or an ellipse, is finite,—returns upon itself; a spiral spring, wound tight, is an infinite curve of slow development, but in the act of springing loose it is "attaining infinity" (*i.e.* approximating to, but not attaining, straightness, *M. P.*, vol. iv. chap. xvii.)

"Almost all these lines are expressive of action

or *force* of some kind, while the circle is a line of limitation or support. In leafage they mark the forces of its growth or expansion, but some among the most beautiful of them are described by bodies variously in motion, or subjected to force,—as by projectiles in the air, by the particles of water in a gentle current, by planets in motion in an orbit, by their satellites, if the actual path of the satellite in space be considered instead of its relation to the planet; by boats or birds, turning in the water or in the air, by clouds in various action upon the wind, by sails in the curvatures they assume under its force, and by thousands of other objects moving or bearing force. . . . Circular curves, on the contrary, are always, I think, curves of limitation or support; that is to say, curves of perfect rest. . . . The circle is the consequence not of the energy of the body, but of its being forbidden to leave the centre" (*S. V.*, vol. i. chap. xx. § 20).

From another point of view the same kind of curve may be considered as expressing restraint or moderation, one of the laws of Beauty—the restraint of the artist producing the same result with that of the energy of Nature. In Nature action approximates to the straight line without attaining it; it is only theoretically that any body will move in a straight line; practically there are disturbing influences of gravitation, etc. In Art the movement of the hand, and the love of Beauty, and instinct for curvature, tend to violence of curvature, and straightness is the result of thoughtfulness. But absolute straightness is thought

unconditioned by emotion, and therefore scientific, not artistic. On the other hand, violent curvature implies unbridled appetite for emotional excitement; and "the great and temperate designer does not allow himself any violent curves; he works much with lines in which the curvature, though always existing, is long before it is perceived. He dwells on all those subdued curvatures to the uttermost, and opposes them with still severer lines to bring them out in fuller sweetness; and, at last, he allows himself a momentary curve of energy, and all the work is, in an instant, full of life and grace" (*S. V.*, vol. iii. chap. i. § 8). This is illustrated in the difference of design in earlier Gothic and the later Flamboyant "curliewhirlies and whigmaleeries," which, by mere redundance and intemperance of curvature, cancel one another's effect. In Nature these subtle and infinite curves are used in every possible combination, and the first condition of the use of the line is sensitiveness to their presence; the next, appreciation of their subtlety.

This subject of curvature is one to which Mr. Ruskin continually returns, as of capital importance to Art; and in an art like Engraving, where the line plays so important a part, it must be kept prominently in view, as distinguishing good work from bad.

139. *Methods of Engraving.* — "Engraving, then, is, in brief terms, the Art of Scratch." If it be permitted to a compiler to record his personal impressions, I should like to recollect the histrionic delivery of that sentence, in which the Slade

Professor, more than eighteen years ago, gave the syllabus of his course in a word and a gesture never to be forgotten by his audience: "It is essentially the cutting into a solid substance for the sake of making your ideas as permanent as possible—graven with an iron pen in the rock for ever. *Permanence,* you observe, is the object, not multiplicability. . . . As the primitive design is in lines or dots, the primitive cutting of such design is a scratch or a hole; and scratchable solids being essentially three—stone, wood, metal—we shall have three great schools of engraving to investigate in each material" (*A. F.*, § 34).

The engraving in stone is that of which we have spoken as a form of architectural decoration, illustrated by the marble and serpentine mosaics of San Michele at Lucca; and developing into Florentine mosaic on the one hand, *niello* on the other, and infinite minor arts. It ranks with the other kinds of Engraving as distinct from Drawing, because the line can be cut with effort only, and not easily. "An engraved line is, and ought to be, recognised as more grand than a pen or pencil line, because it was more difficult to execute it. . . . Every line has been costly; but observe, costly of deliberative, no less than of athletic or executive power." There is no rubbing out in the finest engraving; the line is laid down once for all. In Dürer's Knight and Death the horse's leg was altered, but the original line remains, partly turned into blades of grass,—still puzzling the interpreters.

Engraving on metal differs from pen-drawing in its greater precision and fineness—a perfect point on a perfect surface, which offers greater possibilities and greater difficulties. An enormous amount of labour is given to the hatching and stippling of finished plates; and the technical results are so interesting in themselves that they obscure, in most instances, the purely artistic value of the original intention, and degrade the artist into the artificer.

The fact that the line is the valuable thing in Engraving makes it important to give prominence to the line as such, and not to use it merely as a laborious method of getting tone and gradation of modelling, which can be better got by other methods. As a sculptor's first business is to make his surfaces pleasant in themselves, so an engraver's business is to make his lines pleasant in themselves; to choose such subjects, and to use such treatment as will bring out their full value as a decorative material. This was done in the early examples attributed to Baccio Bandini from Botticelli's designs—examples at any rate of Botticelli's time. In these there is little attempt at chiaroscuro, no refinement of gradation, but the lines are full of thought and feeling, giving full scope to ideal beauty. They are done at a single cut on copper, as they cannot be done on steel; and consequently have more power and grace than the duller and more laborious retouchings of modern work, with its mechanical methods.

No realisation, no chiaroscuro is possible to this work. It is purely artistic. The introduction

of alien ambitions is the ruin of this, as of any other art (*A. F.*, Lect. iv.) It is impossible to engrave good colour-painting, and the designer's intention must be altered to suit it to the requirements of the public. So that the modern school of engraving does harm not only to its own Art, but to that of the painter. The right sort of work for the engraver is: (1) Outlines from the great frescoes of the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries in Italy, with so much pale tinting as may be explanatory of their main masses, with the local darks and lights brilliantly relieved; (2) finished small plates for book illustration; (3) vigorous mezzotints from pictures of the great masters, which originally present noble contrasts of light and shade; (4) original designs by painters themselves, decisively engraved in few lines (*not* etched). And the able men who are spending their strength on a mistaken Art should devote themselves to making intelligent and interesting coloured copies of the original works, which would be more honoured, and more truly popularised thereby (*A. F.*, Appendix, and *Cestus of Aglaia*, chap. ix.) That such copies are worth making has been proved by Mr. Ward, Mr. A. Macdonald, now Curator of the University Galleries, Mr. Fairfax Murray, Signor Alessandri, and others, who have been employed by Mr. Ruskin for the purpose.

140. *Woodcutting.* — The third form of the "Art of Scratch" is that which makes its incisions upon wood; and here the intention of permanence is divided with that of reproduction. It is consequently a lower form of the Art, and in some

manners of woodcutting, where the complete picture is drawn by one artist and cut by another, tends to servility. But in proportion as the engraver chooses his own line and develops it according to the technical conditions, it becomes artistic. The cuts by the late Mr. Burgess in *Aratra Pentelici* may be named as exemplary of the refinement of the Art, without any attempt at microscopic handling; the lines are visible enough, but they are instinct with feeling.

Wood, as being easier to cut than metal, accepts a ruder and more elementary treatment. That is not obtained by a sketchy handling of the pencil of the draughtsman on wood, which generally leaves greater and more servile labour to the engraver. The thin even line of metal-engraving is its technical condition; the thick and varying dark line is the virtue of a woodcut (*A. F.*, Lect. iii.)

On the other hand, thin light lines can easily be cut in wood, and the modern school of wood-engraving has done ingenious work in this kind. But there is a difference between the white *line* and the white *space*. White lines do not express transparency; when they are used in hatching to represent flesh they fail of perfect effect, because it is the veil of dark over light, the network of black lines, that gives the transparent texture of flesh; and transparency as well as gradation is required in flesh painting (*A. E.*, Lect. v.)

But the white space is the true distinctive virtue of woodcut—such as Bewick used—so long as it does not leave a *black* space. The sensational and violent contrasts of black and white in cheap

woodcutting show, not the virtues of the material, but its vice. All great Art is delicate. White spaces, leaving firm and determined, but not too even and fragile, lines—the style of Holbein—are therefore the final and ultimate conception of wood-engraving. But in this manner, as in metal, chiaroscuro is impossible; tone is out of the question. And the virtue of the Art is to express what cannot be expressed by any other means; it must leave to others the subtle gradations and values of tone and modelling, and lean upon its white space and firm varied line. Of modern work the engravings in "Punch," after Mr. du Maurier and Mr. Tenniel, are cited by Mr. Ruskin as praiseworthy in their degree because they leave chiaroscuro, and dwell upon local colour and characteristic outline, but not enough so to be great Art. The hatching in them is a concession to popular taste, confused with modern line-engraving and pen-drawing; they have the elements of greatness mingled with that want of lucidity in aim which is characteristic of modern life. "Used rightly, on its own ground, it is the *most purely intellectual* of all Art. Fine woodcutting is entirely abstract, thoughtful, and passionate" (*Cestus of Aglaia*, chap. ix.)

141. *Etching.*—In *The Elements of Drawing*, and all his earlier writing, Mr. Ruskin gave Rembrandt's etchings as standard work for the student's imitation, especially the "Spotted Shell." But later on he gave his reasons in the *Cestus of Aglaia* (chap. v.) against the study of this form of Art, in which violent chiaroscuro and overwrought

modelling are combined with an absence of decision and precision, which makes it an unsafe guide for a beginner. Not that all Rembrandt's etchings are alike in this respect, nor that his best are not the best things of their kind; but in putting examples before the student it is necessary to show him what may serve for ideals of treatment and expression without fail or error. And as it is innate in the artistic beginner to scribble rather than to draw, and to look for strength of gradation rather than for values, these works tend to strengthen him in his errors, and can be safely studied only after his ideals are formed on definite principles, and his perceptions made delicate by severer models.

The *Lectures on Engraving* contain no account of etching, which is summarily treated in a letter to "The Architect" (27th December 1873) on the text supplied by Mr. Ernest George's works. The critic begins, after his manner, by complimenting, and then—students who have worked under him know the terror, and the tonic, of the cold douche. "As soon as Mr. George has learned what true light and shade is (and a few careful studies with brush or chalk would enable him to do so) he will not labour his etched subjects in vain. The virtue of an etching, in this respect, is to express perfectly harmonious sense of light and shade, but not to realise it. All fine etchings are done with few lines.

"Secondly—and this is a still more important general principle (I must let myself fall into dictatorial terms for brevity's sake)—let your few lines

be sternly clear, however delicate, or however dark. All burr and botch is child's play, and a true draughtsman must never be at the mercy of his copper and ink. Drive your line well and fairly home; do not scrawl or zigzag; know where your hand is going, and what it is doing, to a hair's-breadth, then bite clear and clean, and let the last impression be as good as the first. When it begins to fail, break your plate.

"Third general principle. Do not depend much on various biting. For a true master and a great purpose, even one biting is enough. By no flux or dilution of acid can you ever etch a curl of hair or a cloud; and if you think you can etch the gradations of coarser things, it is only because you have never seen them. Try at your leisure to etch a teacup or a tallow candle, of their real size; see what you can make of the gradations of these familiar articles; if you succeed to your mind, you may try something more difficult afterwards."

In other words, etching, like all engraving hitherto named, is not essentially an Art of chiaroscuro, but of line. It may give strength of shadow, as Mr. Ruskin has done, none more vigorously, in his soft-ground plates to *The Seven Lamps* (early editions); or it may give exquisite refinement of line, like his plates in *Modern Painters*, but not modelling, or tone, in a safe, complete, and legitimate manner. However strongly worded his advice may seem, it coincides with the principles of our good modern masters of the craft, whose lightest and most linear work is their best and

greatest. It is only the second-rate aquafortist whose hand runs away with him; it is only the inferior critic who demands a result incompatible with technical conditions.

142. *Mezzotint.*—The proper means of expression by Engraving, in the kinds hitherto considered, is the line. Neither woodcutting nor etching, in the conception of them, undertake chiaroscuro; but that is the province of mezzotint; and the revival of this Art in the hands of artists is a healthy sign of recent progress. Much of the work that is badly done in etching may be perfectly done in mezzotint; gradation and modelling, light and shade in all its strength and variety, tone with its subtleties, can be got permanently and beautifully in the scraped plate; and if it be combined with etched outline, as in Turner's *Liber Studiorum*, a legitimate method is offered to the lover of chiaroscuro. This etched outline is necessary to complete the picture, when it is to satisfy the eye of a draughtsman (*L. A.*, § 161); but fine work has been done without it, or almost without it, in the plates of *The Harbours of England*, engraved by Lupton after Turner. Such pure mezzotint, however, tends to heaviness and a want of brilliancy; and to obviate this Turner used to scratch the proofs with the penknife, sparkling them over with scattered lights, to the great damage of the breadth and repose of his drawing, as in the Portsmouth of that series, where the lower part of the picture is completely spoiled by this unworthy concession to popular requirement. But when the etched line is used, as in all the mezzotints in

Mr. Ruskin's works (for example, the fine Geranium engraved by Mr. George Allen in *L. F.*), there is no such sense of dulness; the contrast of crisp line and soft gradation is parallel to that of incision and surface in fine Sculpture.

Our author's notices of Engraving, especially his condemnation of the usual aims and ambitions in popular woodcutting and etching, often seem unreasonable to the reader who comes upon them isolated in the corners of newspapers and the chance pages of magazines. But it is impossible to review his whole scheme of Art criticism without coming to the conclusion that a consistent system underlies his particular judgments; that he delivers his sentences in accordance with a well-established code of laws; and that the justice of his condemnation or approbation can never be understood or impugned without reference to that code, and to the constitution of the realm of Art as a whole. In certain instances he may err, as any judge may err, by an over-severe sentence, or too lenient view of the case; but like any other judge, he is not giving out mere casual and unconsidered opinions. When he sends an offending artist to penal servitude with the charcoal or the pen, still more when he puts on the black cap, there is always a kind-hearted outcry from an uncritical public, and plenty of ingenious special pleading for the prisoner at the bar. But there are very few persons who, like Mr. Ruskin, have taken the trouble to investigate the laws of this great kingdom of human life; and fewer who base their judgments, like him, on an acquaintance with the constitution of all Art.

And in this review of the laws of Engraving, which we have roughly codified in connection with those of other Arts, we have seen, if nothing else, the logical necessity of some of his most surprising conclusions.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### DRAWING

143. *Light.*—In opening the whole discussion of the laws of Beauty (*M. P.*, vol. ii. chap. v.) Mr. Ruskin mentioned as the earliest and strongest impression received from landscape nature, that of the sky, relieved in light against a dark near foreground, which cuts off the horizon. It is not the intensity of light, nor the forms of mountain or cloud, that produces that effect, "but there is one thing that it has, or suggests, which no other object of sight suggests in equal degree, and that is—Infinity." And later on in the same chapter he shows that the artistic expression of Infinity in lines is subtle curvature; in tones gradation. So that there is a connection in thought established between luminosity and gradation, which is analogous to their connection in fact. "On the right gradation of focusing of light and colour depends, in great measure, the value of both. And it is generally to be observed that even raw and valueless colour, if rightly and subtly gradated, will in some measure stand for light; and that the most transparent and perfect hue will be in some

measure unsatisfactory if entirely unvaried. I believe," he says, "the early skies of Raphael owe their luminousness more to their untraceable and subtle gradation than to inherent quality of hue" (*M. P.*, vol. ii. p. 46).

Some twenty-five years later he was still teaching the same doctrine in the first Oxford lectures, showing "how entirely effects of light depend on delineation, and *gradation of spaces*, and not on methods of shading," with instances from Dürer, Turner, and Leonardo. And later still he tells the student that the attention must be fixed on "the gradation of the luminous surface" (*L. F.*, chap. x. § 10), and illustrating it with a fine mezzotint from his drawing of a globe, so delicately gradated that it seems to stand from the page as a thing of light; and that without any violent contrast of background, which here is a tender gray. The gist of his doctrine is, that light, whether of the sky, or of any reflecting surface, is shown in Nature and represented in Art by tender gradation, not by forcing its contrast against strong darkness; in other words, that the Rembrandtesque chiaroscuro, if intended as a means of getting light, is a mistake. Shade is a necessary condition of light, but not violent shade. Not only does light tell by suffusion obliterating the gloom, but its essential effect is not contrast so much as gradation.

144. *Shade.*—The essential effect of shade is, on the contrary, not depth, but flatness. In shade the reflected light tells by its gradation, but the whole mass of shade as distinct—and it must be

quite distinct—from light, tells as the flat space contrasted with the gradated mass. The beginner ought not to look for reflected light; he is to keep his study broad in its division of light from darkness; "the work of the feeblest artists may be known by the vulgar glittering of its light, and the far-sought reflection in its shadow" (*L. F.*, chap. x. § 9). "And now we find the use of having Leonardo for our guide. He is supreme in all questions of execution; and in his 28th chapter you will find that shadows are to be *dolce e sfumose*, to be tender, and to look as if they were exhaled or breathed on the paper. Then look at any of Michelangelo's finished drawings, or of Correggio's sketches, and you will see that the true nurse of light is in Art, as in Nature, the cloud; a misty and tender darkness, made lovely by gradation" (*L. A.*, § 164).

Mr. Ruskin has never been supposed to be an advocate of "Breadth at any price"; but drawings executed in this way cannot fail of breadth. It is not sparkle, nor the whiteness of isolated patches, nor the contrast of vigorous gloom, that can give luminosity, he teaches; but the quiet and delicate gradation of the lighted masses, as opposed to the quiet and delicate flatness of the spaces in shade. The shade must not be dark, or the suffusion of light is lost; it must not be greatly varied in tone, or the relation of its values to the much more varied values of the light is lost. Nature's absolute light and dark cannot usually be imitated; all we can do is to represent the relations of tone; and this rule is a memorandum of the normal

conditions, namely, that the light masses are much more widely varied in tone than the dark; the lights have a wider range of values than the darks.

145. *Methods of Draughtsmanship.*—Light and shade are therefore absolutely independent of material or method of production or execution, so long as the light is subtly gradated, and the dark tender and quiet.

The methods of production in Drawing are three: (*a*) black-lead pencil or chalk or silver point, (*b*) pen, and (*c*) the brush, called in *Laws of Fésole* the pencil, after the old-fashioned use of the word. These can all be used for two purposes—to draw lines or to make tints. The first two instruments are closely related to the practices of Engraving, and the last to those of Painting. But in Drawing their use is legitimately to express chiaroscuro, based on delineation. Without previous delineation, the right amount of light and dark, their proper placing and shaping, are impossible; and, consequently, the "Mother Outline," as Blake called it, is a necessary beginning. But how far this preliminary is to be demanded as a separate end, perfectly attained in itself, is doubtful. The best artists have not left any perfect outlines (except in Engraved works), and yet Mr. Ruskin is inclined to require from students as complete an outline as possible. In *The Elements of Drawing* he waives this requirement, but insists upon it in *The Laws of Fésole* (*Cestus of Aglaia*, chap. i.; *E. D.*, Preface; *L. F.*, chap. ii. §§ 1, 3).

The first use of the lead, chalk, or silver point, of the pen, and of the brush is, therefore, to draw

lines; and especially the outline or contour of masses, to be ultimately shaded. And though the student is permitted to block out his forms, strike in his curves with repeated lines, retouch, and finally to fix the accurate contour with pen or brush-point, rubbing away the tentative preliminary of lead-pencil with bread or indiarubber, yet the aim of the draughtsman is to strike the right line at once. "Of these three tasks, outline, colour, and shade, outline, in perfection, is the most difficult; but students must begin with that task, and are masters when they can see to the end of it, though they never reach it" (*L. F.*, chap. ii. § 4).

146. *Transparency and Value.*—The second use of these instruments is to shade, and here Mr. Ruskin's teaching differs widely from that usually given, and his more recent teaching differs considerably from his earlier. The beautiful qualities obtained by cross hatching and stippling, producing a surface in itself decorative and interesting without reference to imitation of Nature, have led drawing-masters of all ranks to require the student to produce this quality at all hazards. Not only is the hatched surface decoratively beautiful, but it is truly suggestive of transparency, and transparency is usually a quality of shade. Therefore the point is used in preference to the stump or the brush, both in common practice and in *The Elements of Drawing*, to get a reticulated texture with transparency and "quality" beautiful in themselves.

To this method there are several objections,

mentioned in many places in our author's Oxford teaching. In the first place, it is laborious, and "uncontributive toil is one of the forms of ruin" (*Academy Notes*, 1859); it has no virtue in itself; if, of two methods, one can produce a good result more easily than the other, that one is right and the other wrong. The three months' stippling spent on a drawing from the antique is labour thrown away, and worse than thrown away, for it deadens the perceptions of the student even though it practises his hand. Better hand-practice is given by accurate outlining, and the power of artistic observation is more rapidly developed by making a drawing every day than by making only one in three months.

In the next place, it fixes the student's attention on the execution and "quality" of his work, rather than upon its imitative truth. If Drawing were Engraving or Sculpture, in which decorative effect is primary, this might be allowed; but the End of Drawing is representation, and this can be attained only by perception of values. But these stippled drawings ignore values. They make one side of a figure black and the other white—regardless of the true tenderness of tone of flesh as compared with other objects in the field of vision (*L. F.*, chap. x. § 3; *L. A.*, § 164). This was Mr. Ruskin's doctrine for years before the present Slade Professor at London began to revolutionise the practice of drawing-schools, and long before the recent attempts at open-air flesh-painting taught the public that a figure need not be half white and half black.

In the third place, such transparent shading is very difficult to produce in real beauty—as it is done by great masters; and as a matter of fact the great masters, when they draw figures, do not always attempt it. The shading in Raphael's sketches is done with parallel lines, producing a light and even tint, although Michelangelo at times works out his tones in highly finished transparency, far beyond the power of the student. "It requires the most careful and patient teaching to develop this faculty (of observing gradations), and it can only be developed at all by *rapid* and *various* practice from natural objects, during which the attention of the student must be directed only to the facts of the shadows themselves, and not at all arrested on methods of producing them. He may even be allowed to produce them as he likes, or as he can; the thing required of him being only that the shade be of the right darkness, of the right shape, and in the right relation to other shades round it, and not at all that it shall be prettily cross-hatched or deceptively transparent. But at present the only virtues required in shadow are that it shall be pretty in texture and picturesquely effective; and it is not thought of the smallest consequence that it should be in the right place, or of the right depth. And the consequence is that the student remains, when he becomes a painter, a mere manufacturer of conventional shadows of agreeable texture, and to the end of his life incapable of perceiving the conditions of the simplest natural passage of chiaroscuro" (*L. F.*, Preface).

147. *Pen and Wash.*—The practice of Mr. Ruskin's teaching is therefore to ask for shading in monochrome—sepia or lamp-black—with the brush, laid upon a carefully prepared outline. In this work the relations of tone and gradations are the especial qualities insisted upon, but transparency is not necessarily neglected. A water-colour tint is transparent when it is laid-in wet, and not retouched. After the student has prepared his careful and accurate pen outline, he is to match the general value of each whole mass with a single tint, and lay it on; then, with a nearly dry brush, to take out the lights, and reinforce the darks, if necessary, with added colour (*L. F.*, chap. vi. § 34). The result of this method is an exquisitely gradated and necessarily delicate and transparent shading. To get the proper depth of tint the same plan of "matching" may be used as that recommended for colour; namely, to touch the edge of a separate slip of paper and hold it up between the eye and the object, and when the tones are identical, to lay the tint so determined upon the drawing.

This is only the water-colour way of that *matching with the palette knife*, which is now taught to students of oil-painting in England and France; but Ruskin began the practice fifty years ago with his cyanometer, or gradated slip of blue paper, to measure the depth of blue in the sky; and taught it forty years ago as the proper method of learning to colour. And his doctrine, that the student should fix for every mass its general value of tone, is the same with Carolus Duran's

*demi-teint général*, to be reinforced with emphases of light and dark.

This system of pen and wash was immediately adopted from Turner, but it was formerly a common practice, and fell into disuse chiefly, I believe, as a result of the Romanticist love of picturesque rather than beauty or sublimity, and of sparkle and brilliancy rather than luminosity and breadth. The Hardingesque lead-pencil is the material for picturesque sketching, but the pen and wash for true chiaroscuro drawing, and as such has always been used by great masters from the earliest times. Mr. Ruskin is not a bigot of the brush, and does not require that all pen-shading, hatching, and stippling, and pencil-sketching are to be given up; his teaching, it must be remembered, is for students, and for serious students working in the University drawing classes. Out-of-doors sketching is quite another thing; there, one must make one's notes as they can be most conveniently made, frankly as memoranda. Artists' studies are, again, left untouched by this teaching; every artist finds out his own methods, and works in his own way. But to express all that can be expressed, in the temper of serious Art, with high ideals and aims, the pen and wash is the right and proper method.

In applying this method to landscape it is hardly necessary to say that the taking out of lights is not an inseparable part of the principle; a sky, of course, can be gradated in one wash in the usual manner, and elaborate directions are given for gradated washes in *L. F.*, chap. x. Still-life and all kinds of indoor and foreground

subjects offer no difficulties in this manner; but figures, in the ordinary course of study from the nude, are not suited to pen and wash. The aim of the student in figure-drawing is to learn the outline and modelling, not chiaroscuro; therefore the Point is the proper instrument. But when figures are seen in lateral light, or studied as problems of tone, then pen and wash is the easiest and most rapid, as well as the most certain and accurate method; and it should be more widely known as Mr. Ruskin's modern teaching, opposed to the superseded pen-stippling of his *Elements of Drawing*.

148. *The Three Kinds of Chiaroscuro.*—With the pen and wash, or mezzotint method, three kinds of light and shade can be expressed, the first two of which are called by Mr. Ruskin *Formal* and *Aerial* chiaroscuro. To the third he gives no name, but plainly indicates that he means the expression of *values*, as they are now called (but not by Mr. Ruskin); that is, the relations of tone between masses not only differently lighted but differently coloured, which we may call *Tonal* chiaroscuro.

The first kind has nothing to do with values or tone; it considers its subject as colourless—as a plaster cast; and makes all lights equally bright, whatever their colour in Nature. "The method of study which refuses local colour, partly by the apparent dignity and science of it, and partly by the feverish brilliancy of effect induced in Engraving by leaving all the lights white, became the preferred method of the schools of the

Renaissance, headed by Leonardo; and it was both familiarised and perpetuated by the engravings of Dürer and Marcantonio. It has been extremely mischievous in this supremacy. . . . Every student ought, however, to understand, and sometimes to use, the method" (*L. F.*, chap. x. § 34).

The use of the method is to detach form from colour in study. We saw that natural colour, so far from bringing out the form, obscures it and complicates it. Therefore, to study form it is necessary to disentangle it from colour, and from the values of local colours, which break it up and disguise it. For example, a flower is exquisite in colour and exquisite in form, but both cannot be simultaneously studied, if the study is to be more than superficial. By eliminating colour the form can be determined; in pen and wash, according to the Leonardesque or Formal chiaroscuro (the Geranium in *L. F.* and *L. A.*, § 163). The abuse of the method is when it is carried into painting. What is right in a drawing is wrong in a painting, because the technical conditions are different, and the conception of the Art is different. The "mischief" done by the "supremacy" of Formal chiaroscuro is the denial of values, and habituation of the public to the entirely artificial light and shade of the Academical School.

The method of it is simply to keep the lights gradated and the darks tender and flat. It does not imply great depth of darkness, but equal brilliance of all lights, whatever their own values in Nature (*L. A.*, §§ 167, 168).

The second kind is Aerial chiaroscuro, which is to the first as landscape is to indoor-painting; it is based on the same principle, only it takes account of cross lights, and the broad reflections of outdoor effect from clouds and the sky, and of aerial perspective; while Formal chiaroscuro assumed the light to be coming from a narrow window or the sun. This still takes no special account of values as such, but makes the most distinctly lighted parts of the scene white, and the strongest shadows as dark as consistent with transparency. "In order to produce a mental impression of the facts, two distinct methods may be followed: The first, to shade downwards from the lights, making everything darker in due proportion, until, the scale of our power being ended, the mass of the picture is lost in shade. The second, to assume the points of extreme darkness for a basis, and to light everything above these in due proportion, till the mass of the picture is lost in light" (*L. A.*, § 169). The first method is essentially the chiaroscurist method; the second is that adopted by the best colourists in preparing for a coloured picture. The relative virtues of the systems of light and shade used by different artists—Turner, Veronese, and Rembrandt—are discussed in *Modern Painters*, vol. iv. chap. iii., which leads to the same conclusion, namely, that a high key of tone is better for colour than a low key, though it is at the choice of the artist which he adopts. The third method is that in which the values of local colour are admitted as integral part of the chiaroscuro scheme. "In general, and

more especially in the practice which is to guide you to colour, it is better to regard the local colour as part of the general light and dark to be imitated; and to consider all Nature merely as a mosaic of different colours, to be imitated one by one in simplicity" (*L. A.*, § 171). This applies to landscape and figure, to still-life and studies of detached objects without a background—to all equally; they may be treated in such a way as to secure their form and modelling, or they may be treated so as to secure their values. And the last way is that to which the study of drawing is to lead in the end, before it glides into painting. The best manner of drawing is therefore firm outline, blocked out with pencil and fixed with pen; single tints of monochrome water-colour, gradated while wet, not retouched; each mass being finished separately with especial attention to its general value.

149. *The Schools of Line.*—We have seen in several instances that it is at the choice of the artist to represent those truths of Nature which can be told in lines, or those which can be told in chiaroscuro; between different kinds of line-drawing there is a further selection to be made, and between different kinds of light and shade. Consequently it is not reasonable to assume that all artists work with the same intention, and according to the same principles; on the contrary, every artist has his own separate ideals, or combination of ideals, of which the variety is infinite; and his work must be judged by the standard he chooses, not by the critic's ideals of excellence.

The *artist* may be judged by the critic's ideal, but his *work* must be judged by his own.

Painters may be considered under three main divisions: They are chiefly interested in contour and curvature, or they are chiefly interested in effect of light in mass and modelling, or they are chiefly interested in colour. They are greater when they combine more excellences, and have a wider range; but most men have a definite preference for Line, Light, or Colour. Any of these may be ideally treated or realistically, delicately or coarsely, with more or less of other subsidiary aims and attempts; but the three schools are distinct as schools, however difficult it may be to assign the rank of a given painter in them.

The earliest Art is usually linear, characteristic of savage life and of feverish energy of imagination. The next step is to fill the contours of natural forms with light and shade, or with colour. The third step is to introduce gradation, so that the flat space of shade or colour becomes a gradated and modelled mass, expressive of surface and roundness. And the last stage, the final reach of Art, unites the modelled light and shade to the gradated colour. In perfect development of this principle of progress we have—(1) the early Art of line, barbaric and abstract. In the second stage (2) Greek vase-painting, the etched outline combined with colour that is hardly so much colour as tone, expressive of degrees of light; and (3) Gothic glass and decorative painting, in which the strongly-marked outline is filled with flat, or

nearly flat, colour, not attempting the expression of surface. In the third stage (4) the schools represented by Leonardo, who aim at chiaroscuro, roundness, sculpturesque modelling, mass with light; and (5) Giorgione and his schools, the colourists who, on the one hand, are not content with flat spaces of ideal hues; but, on the other, fear to contaminate their colour with actual shade. And the union of (4) and (5) produces (6), the completed Venetian School, in which chiaroscuro and colour are united (*L. A.*, §§ 137-139). Each of these has its virtues and its vices; not by following any one style can a student become a master, but by finding out his own preferences and abilities and developing them.

The Schools of Line (1), (2), and (3) are alike in this, that they "lean on a firm and determined outline," as Sir Joshua Reynolds advised his pupils to do. The Ideal Art of Florence was of this class, and dwells on the musical or mathematical art of line-composition as its chief element. For a public accustomed to chiaroscuro and Realism they have little interest,—these primitive masters and the contemporaries of Botticelli,—because what they give is not what is commonly wanted nowadays, but what they give is a more purely artistic ideal than that which we find popular. Men like some of our so-called decorators, who find themselves revolting from the hybrid ideals and vacillating aims of their contemporaries to a sympathy with the clear perceptions and definite intentions of the Schools of Line, are not therefore imitators of the quattrocentisti and Greek bas-relief

sculptors, nor need they be classed with derivative mannerists. Realism has by no means a monopoly of right principles; it is just as right to lean on your outline, and emphasise your design, if you honestly feel interested in it.

150. *The Schools of Chiaroscuro.* — In the next stage, that of modelled masses (4) is the offspring of (2), and (5) of (3). The Chiaroscurist School is the child of the Greeks, inheriting the desire for light; and all effects of light, shown in so much modern work, whether sunshine or candle-glimmer, in landscape or interiors—all these are developments of this school, and can be traced back through the Dutch to the influence of the Bolognese and Neapolitans and Leonardo, who revived, if he did not inherit, the *skiagraphia* of Apollodorus. Whenever the effect of light overrides colour—whenever colour, and all the possibilities of colour, are sacrificed in any way to the attempt to represent lighting—then the work belongs to the Schools of Chiaroscuro.

Of this there are three different cases, which we may call candle-light, studio-light, and sunlight. By candle-light, or any artificial light, colours are altered or destroyed more or less; and though it is quite possible to paint such a subject in the colourist manner, the tendency of artists who paint candle-light is to look for the shine, not the colour, of the flame, and the gloom, not the colour, of the shade.

The old-fashioned studio effect, shutting off reflection and diminishing the quantity of light in the shades, diminishes the colour in them, so that

painters of indoor subjects,—cottage interiors and so on—though they may be colourists, are tempted to aim for chiaroscuro, and contrast the high lights with breadth of brown or black gloom. In a northern climate and in a poorly-lighted room there is usually too little light to show the colour of the shades; when sunlight is in the air the shades start into fulness of colour.

But when sunlight falls on the subject the contrast between the lights and darks is so great that, in any attempt to render it, colour again gives way to chiaroscuro. Very wonderful work has been done by way of suggesting sunlight-effect, both in landscape and figure-painting, and it has been combined by some artists with a great sense of colour. But, after all, these attempts are at best suggestive; the actual tone of sunlight is quite impossible to render in Art (*Academy Notes*, 1859; *L. F.*, Aph. 12, 13), and as the studio-effect lends itself to vulgar imitation, so the sun-light-effect tempts the painter to *tours-de-force*, which, however successful, detract from other aims and excellences of Art, and call the spectator's attention to the cleverness of the painter rather than the nobility of his subject.

The Chiaroscuro School, then, seeks light in contrast with shade. From the first simple efforts at approximate value—for such are the vase-paintings—the chiaroscurists proceed to elaborate insistence upon surface-modelling, so that their art is akin to Sculpture; it is not Painting, with all the advantage of its technical conditions in its distinctive conception. "The way by light and

shade is taken by men of the highest powers of thought, and most earnest desire for truth; they long for light, and for knowledge of all that light can show. But, seeking for light, they perceive also darkness; seeking for truth and substance, they find vanity. They look for form in the earth, for dawn in the sky; and, seeking these, they find formlessness in the earth, and night in the sky" (*L. A.*, § 148). And so the school develops into Rembrandtism, and the oppressive gloom from which healthy English Art has twice successfully revolted—once in the last century under the lead of Hogarth, and again in this century under the lead of the Pre-Raphaelites.

To this school, not to the lower classes of it, the intellectual artist is sure to belong; the artist whose reasoning powers check and control that instinctive faculty and emotional impulsive cordiality which is the other element of the artistic nature. And, accepting the conditions of his work, he may become one of the greatest, because a perfect balance between the two sides of genius is impossible, or hardly to be hoped for. But he will not advance his Art of Painting, as Painting, to its highest pitch; he will be a great draughtsman, and seen at his best in his drawings and engravings after his work.

As himself belonging to this school, Mr. Ruskin has illustrated its greatness with affection, and its degradation with bitterness. The painting of the inferior Dutchmen and their imitators in England and France, whose chief artistic virtue is the dexterous touching of solid lights on

transparent shades, the tedious or tricky gloom of misdirected engraving and etching, and the nightmare vulgarity of the black woodcut—all these he would wave aside, and bid them, as they have "come like shadows, so depart."

# CHAPTER XIX

## PAINTING

151. *The Schools of Colour.*—The nature and essence of Painting, as distinguished from any other art, is that it gives Colour. The chiaroscurist, whether he uses oil-paint or water-colour or charcoal or mezzotint, thinks first of his lights and shades, and neglects his colour more or less; and if he uses colour at all, he defies his technical conditions in making chiaroscuro his principal object. So that the true painters are the colourists: "On this issue hangs the nobleness of Painting as an Art altogether, for it is distinctively the Art of colouring, not of shaping or relating. Sculptors and poets can do these; the painter's own work is colour" (*M. P.*, vol. v. p. 321).

The most perfect development of the colour-faculty has been among the Venetians, and that not only in their sixteenth-century painting, but throughout their history. Their earliest architecture shows it already, and Mr. Ruskin suggests that it may have been derived and inherited from the East with the mosaics from Constantinople and the architecture of the Saracens (*S. V.*, vol. ii.

chap. iv. § 28). Accordingly the most perfect development of Painting, as the colour-art, has been among the Venetians, Giorgione completing the power of the pure Colourist School, without chiaroscuro; and Titian, Veronese, and Tintoret uniting all the various elements of Art into one whole under the dominion of colour (*L. A.*, § 139).

Because of the didactic force of Raphael and Michelangelo, and the sentimental interest of the post-Renaissance Schools of chiaroscuro, this Colourist School had fallen into some neglect and contempt before Mr. Ruskin illustrated it in *Modern Painters* and *Stones of Venice*. Artists like Reynolds and others went to Venice and tried to rival the results of Titian; but the Art-philosophers and critics placed the school in a very inferior position, from which our author helped to rescue it by showing the moral dignity of Colour and its artistic importance.

The moral dignity of Colour was denied by the sentimentalists and philosophers of half a century ago, who placed the excellence of Art on its intellectual side, and were adherents of chiaroscuro. The High Art School was anti-colourist, and though our author is not without his leanings to Idealism and to light and shade, he saw that there was another side to the question (*M. P.*, vol. iii. p. 32). He found that early Christian Art, the expression of piety and asceticism, as in the case of Angelico, was a colourist Art, and that it lost its great colour-faculty in proportion as it went down the tide of decadence to infidelity and immorality. The pleasure of the eye in colour is

not "sensual" any more than that of the ear in music; the painting of nudity is justified and chastened by colour, and sensual only when treated in the chiaroscuro spirit. Religion uses colour to symbolise its holiest mysteries and enforce its precepts. Nature always colours innocent and kindly creatures, while the venomous animal and inhospitable region are left, in comparison, without colour (see *M. P.*, vol. ii. p. 120, etc.; vol. iii. p. 257; vol. iv. pp. 50-55; and especially vol. v. pp. 320-326; and *S. V.*, vol. iii. chap. iv. § 27). There is voluptuous colour and chaste colour, there is intemperate colour and refined; and the moral dignity of the colourists, as a body of individuals, is at least as great as that of other schools—in some instances it rises far higher.

The artistic importance of colour — not to speak of the rank of painting among the Arts—was equally underrated. In his first volume Mr. Ruskin pointed out the Relativity of Colour, and considered that, as its truths were difficult to attain, its place was comparatively unimportant; but that was at a period when he was still under the influence of academicism. Later on (*M. P.*, vol. iii. chap. xii.) he indicated an adherence to the Scotch school of metaphysics, which believed in a common-sense realism in the question of sensation and perception; as a consequence of which Colour is regarded as something more than subjective—as an actual quality of real external things. This transition led our author—it matters little whether by sound reasoning or not—to a conclusion sound as regards the theory of Art,

and one which was confirmed in his study of the question by the historical method—namely, that Colour is indispensable to the perfect representation of anything; the greatest Colourists are the greatest Realists, and *vice versa*.

152. *The Mutual Dependence of Drawing and Colouring.*—"The business of a painter is to paint. If he can colour, he is a painter though he can do nothing else; if he cannot colour, he is no painter though he may do everything else. But it is, in fact, impossible, if he can colour, but that he should be able to do more; for a faithful study of colour will always give power over form, though the most intense study of form will give no power over colour. The man who can see all the grays and reds and purples in a peach will paint the peach rightly round and rightly altogether; but the man who has only studied its roundness may not see its purples and grays, and if he does not will never get it to look like a peach" (*M. P.*, vol. iv. p. 55). This doctrine was restated in the "Notes on the Turners at Marlborough House, 1857" (reprinted in *L. F.*, chap. viii.), in terms which cannot be well condensed.

"Perhaps no two more apparently contradictory statements could be made in brief terms than these—

"(1) The perfections of drawing and colouring are inconsistent with one another.

"(2) The perfections of drawing and colouring are dependent upon one another.

"And yet both of these statements are true. The first is true, because, in order that colour

may be right, some of the markings necessary to express perfect form must be omitted; and also because, in order that it may be right, the intellect of the artist must be concentrated on that first, and must in some slight degree fail of the intenseness necessary to reach relative truth of form, and *vice versa*.

"The truth of the second proposition is much more commonly disputed. Observe, it is a twofold statement. The perfections of drawing and colouring are reciprocally dependent upon each other, so that—

"*A*, No person can draw perfectly who is not a colourist.

"*B*, No person can colour perfectly who is not a draughtsman.

"*A*, No person can draw perfectly who is not a colourist. For the effect of contour in all surfaces is influenced in Nature by gradations of colour as much as by gradations of shade; so that if you have not a true eye for colour you will judge of the shades wrongly. Thus, if you cannot see the changes of hue in red, you cannot draw a cheek or lip rightly; and if you cannot see the changes of hue in green or blue, you cannot draw a wave. All studies of form made with a despiteful or ignorant neglect of colour lead to exaggerations and misstatements of the form-markings; that is to say, to bad drawing.

"*B*, No person can colour perfectly who is not a draughtsman. For brilliancy of colour depends, first of all, on gradation; and gradation, in its subtleties, cannot be given but by a good draughtsman.

Brilliancy of colour depends next on decision and rapidity in laying it on; and no person can lay it on decisively, and yet so as to fall into, or approximately to fall into, the forms required, without being a thorough draughtsman. And it is always necessary that it should fall into a predeterminate form, not merely that it may represent the intended natural objects, but that it may itself take the shape, as a patch of colour, which will fit it properly to the other patches of colour round about it. If it touches them more or less than is right, its own colour and theirs will both be spoiled. Hence it follows that all very great colourists must be also very great draughtsmen."

It follows also that realistic detail is at once made possible and justified by Colour. To employ Colour for the sake of realisation is the method of vulgar deceptive imitation; but to realise for the sake of the Colour, to refine detail and finish so as to give full scope to all the conditions of the material, is the right aim of the painter (*S. V.*, vol. iii. chap. iv. § 27).

*153. *The Kinds of Colour.*—These conditions of Colour, in painting upon an opaque surface especially, fall under two principal headings, brilliant Colour and subdued. It is at the artist's choice (as far as anything is at his choice) which kind he adopts; for the relativity of colours, the fact that their absolute hue and tone cannot usually be isolated and determined by themselves (*M. P.*, vol. i. p. 69), makes it more important to give the right relation and harmony of all the colours in the picture than to reproduce some

rightly, while others, owing to brightness or depth, are wrong, and the whole therefore inharmonious.

Either subdued or brilliant Colour may be chosen, and may be good or bad according to the colour-power of the artist. It is a mistake to suppose that all subdued Colour is necessarily good; it may become the mere symptom of mental decay and moral collapse; it may emanate from a frivolous mind or a sensual nature. On the other hand, brilliant Colour may become vulgar and gaudy, but it is not necessarily so... If the student is to learn anything from Mr. Ruskin's Art-Teaching, it is that nobody can be safe by adopting a style; there is no salvation in any manner. But for early practice, as straight lines and simple curves are set before a beginner, so brilliant Colour is the most useful. It can be made noble in itself by right treatment and harmony, or subdued to any degree; while the right and wrong of subdued Colour demand a trained eye for their recognition, and are only possible at a more advanced stage of Art-power (*L. F.*, chap. vii.; and see *S. V.*, vol. ii. chap. v. § 30).

The absolute brilliancy of many of Nature's colours cannot be reached in Art (*M. P.*, vol. i. pp. 158-161), and consequently the tone must be lowered, which can be done either with consistent gray, as if the picture were seen in a dark mirror, or with consistent translation of the high-toned colour into the same colour taken at a greater depth. The former is the chiaroscurist, the latter the colourist method (*E. D.*, Letter iii.), and especially that of the Venetians according to

Mr. Ruskin. As the whole matter of lowering the tone and subduing the colour is in the hands of the painter, who can lower any parts of it by any scale he pleases, and in so doing approximate either to abstract chiaroscuro or abstract colour, the possibilities are infinite; and as it is an arbitrary and conventional process, the right and wrong of it cannot be determined by reference to Nature, but only by technical conditions. If it be true that the technical conditions of Painting, as Painting, require the utmost display of colour for its own sake, then the black-mirror system—that of lowering tone by gray or black—is contrary to the principles of the Art; and its advantage, as a ready way of obtaining imitative realism which satisfies present requirements of the contemporary public, means nothing more than a concession to fashion. The Venetian way remains the right one for Painting, as such.

More than that, the darkening of colour by gray shading is not, as it is usually practised, *right* colour. To tint a chiaroscuro drawing or a photograph is not to produce a coloured picture. It merely suggests the approximate colour of the masses; but it does not give the gradation, the play of varied hues and blended tints, which invariably modify and beautify the surface of natural objects. So that chiaroscurist's colour is false, and in a picture which aims at light and shade principally, the colour is better omitted than falsified; the two Arts are distinct, and ought not to be confused (*M. P.*, vol. v. p. 323).

154. *Laws of Colour.*—All beautiful colour is

composed by mingling many hues in one (*M. P.*, vol. iv. p. 110), as in Nature, where the detail is infinitely varied in colour, blending together into a general effect which is most beautiful when it is most difficult to analyse. It follows in this, as in other qualities, the laws of Beauty in general, of which the first is Infinity and incomprehensibility: "No colour harmony is of a high order unless it involves indescribable tints. It is the best possible sign of a colour when nobody who sees it knows what to call it, or how to give an idea of it to any one else. Even among simple hues, the most valuable are these which cannot be defined; the most precious purples will look brown beside pure purple, and purple beside pure brown, and the most precious greens will be called blue if seen beside pure green, and green if seen beside pure blue" (*T. P.*, App. 5).

The next law of Beauty is Gradation. "All good colour is gradated. A blush-rose (or, better still, a blush itself) is the type of rightness in arrangement of pure hue."

Then follows Unity. "All harmonies of colour depend for their vitality on the action and helpful co-operation of every particle of colour they contain. The final particles of colour necessary to the completeness of a colour-harmony are always infinitely small," that is to say, the composition or arrangement of colour must take into account the smallest masses and their shapes and sizes, and the handling of colour must secure—whether at once or by retouching—the right amount and depth to make the admixture perfect. The mere

juxtaposition of complementaries or sequences of colour is not enough to secure harmony; it is a thing too subtle for rules; it is a form of imaginative design.

Repose of colour is obtained in harmonising it, whether brilliant or subdued; and purity, that is, not crudity, but freedom from dirtiness and coarseness, however indescribable the hue, or subdued, is the condition of all colour we like in Nature—in the sky, in the lustre of flowers and birds' plumage and precious stones, and in the painting which is freshly and skilfully executed as opposed to that which is laboured and coarse (*L. F.*, chaps. vii. viii.; *L. A.*, § 174).

Moderation, the last of the laws of Beauty as given above (§ 56), is of capital importance. "The finer the eye for colour, the less it will require to gratify it intensely. But that little must be supremely good and pure, as the finest notes of a great singer, which are so near to silence. And a great colourist will make even the absence of colour lovely, as the fading of the perfect voice makes silence sacred" (*T. P.*, App. 5). "A bad colourist does not *love* beautiful colour better than the best colourist does, not half so much. But he indulges in it to excess; he uses it in large masses, and unsubdued; and then it is a law of Nature, a law as universal as that of gravitation, that he shall not be able to enjoy it so much as if he had used it in less quantity. His eye is jaded and satiated, and the blue and red have life in them no more. He tries to paint them bluer and redder in vain; all the blue has become gray, and gets

grayer the more he adds to it; all his crimson has become brown, and gets more sere and autumnal the more he deepens it. But the great painter is sternly temperate in his work; he loves the vivid colour with all his heart, but for a long time he does not allow himself anything like it, nothing but sober browns and dull grays, and colours that have no conceivable beauty in them; but these by his government become lovely, and after bringing out of them all the life and power they possess, and enjoying them to the uttermost —cautiously, and as the crown of the work, and the consummation of its music, he permits the momentary crimson and azure, and the whole canvas is in a flame" (*S. V.*, vol. iii. chap. i. § 7).

It is this treatment of Colour, and not the choice of contrasts and chords and sequences, that makes a colourist; and these are the Laws of Colour which Mr. Ruskin would have the student bear in mind, although he has analysed in various places the favourite combinations of his favourite painters. Some help may be got from working out his spectrum of twelve standard tints (*L. F.*, chap. vii.) as a rough practical guide to the general theory of complementary colour and what may be called the Symmetry of Colour. For example, considering his twelve colours arranged in a circle as a clock, and calling them, for convenience, by the numbers of the hours of the day, then any sequence (I and II, or II and III) will make a pleasing combination, but it will need, to bring it out, the complement of this combination (I and II will need half-past VII, II and III will need half-past

VIII, and so on). And any discord (such as I and III) will be resolved by striking the complementary of the combination (in this case VIII). The miniaturist's favourite combination, again, may be explained as the equilateral triangle inscribed in the circle (IV, VIII, and XII), and the schemes of colour in decorative Art can be similarly analysed. But all this helps the practical colour-designer very little. If he has true feeling for colour, he will colour well; if he has no such feeling, all the rules in the world will teach him nothing of real importance.

155. *The Three Divisions of Painting.*—It is usually taught that the painter has to attend to three separate elements, to be attained by three separate processes in his practice—line, light and shade, and colour. And the student is commonly advised—that is to say, by teachers deriving their doctrines from the Academical Schools—to sketch his subject in line first, and then to shade it, and finally to colour it. The result of this is that bastard and incomplete system of colouring which is based on formal chiaroscuro, and makes the true colourist method impossible. The only true method of colouring is that which regards *value*, that is to say, the relative loss of light in any mass of colour, from the first; at one step combining colour and tone, treating every mass as —not first tone and then hue, but a definite and ascertainable colour value. "All objects appear to the eye simply as masses of colour of variable depth, texture, and outline. The outline of any object is the limit of its mass, as relieved against

another mass. Take a crocus, and lay it on a green cloth. You will see it detach itself as a mere space of yellow from the green behind it, as it does from the grass. Hold it up against the window; you will see it detach itself as a dark space against the white or blue behind it. In either case its outline is the limit of the space of light or dark colour by which it expresses itself to your sight. . . . Usually light and shade are thought of as separate from colour; but the fact is that all Nature is seen as a mosaic composed of gradated portions of different colours, dark or light. . . . Every light is a shadow compared to higher lights, till we reach the brightness of the sun; and every shadow is a light compared to lower shadows, till we reach the darkness of night. . . . Painters who have no eye for colour have greatly confused and falsified the practice of Art by the theory that shadow is an absence of colour. Shadow is, on the contrary, necessary to the full presence of colour, for every colour is a diminished quantity or energy of light . . . and every *colour* in painting must be a shadow to some brighter colour, and a light to some darker one—all the while being a positive colour itself. And the great splendour of the Venetian School arises from their having seen and held from the beginning this great fact, that shadow is as much colour as light, often much more. In Titian's fullest red the lights are pale rose colour, passing into white, the shadows warm deep crimson. In Veronese's most splendid orange the lights are pale, the shadows crocus colour, and so on. In Nature, dark sides, if seen

by reflected lights, are almost always fuller or warmer in colour than the lights" (*L. A.*, §§ 130-134).

Hence there are three divisions of painting—the process is performed in three movements: first, outline; then colour; and finally, the modification of the colour to express modelling of solid masses (*L. F.*, chap. ii. § 1). Of the outline we have already heard; the next two movements, to be successfully performed, must be nearly simultaneous; so that Painting practically consists in one operation, provided the "firm and determined outline" of Reynolds has been secured or understood. Colour is to be taken into account from the first, and its depth, as well as its hue, assigned to every mass—the modelling of which is to be given, whether in water-colour or oil, while the paint is still wet upon the picture. And this modelling is always, in the school of colour, not a superadded gray or brown, but the strengthening of the colour of the mass as a whole—as it really appears in Nature, except in that dull northern studio-light in which too many of our painters are trained.

156. *Execution.*—From this it follows that there is only one right method of execution: to determine the contours and to fill in the masses, at once of their right depth of colour and proper gradations. Tone is simply the abstraction of their depth, and with sufficient care in securing values, ought not to require separate study and special treatment. Chiaroscuro is another abstraction of their depth and gradation; with such training in the various methods of draughtsmanship in light

and shade, the artist's perceptions should be able to grasp all the problems of modelling and lighting as part of the concrete whole of the *mass*, considered as colour-value, rightly limited and rightly modelled.

Each mass ought therefore to be painted separately, and painted at once, without retouching: that is the perfect and ideal manner of execution. Superadded labour is only a concession to incapacity, but such incapacity as no painter need be ashamed to confess. The question is here, as it was in Architecture, not what is practicable under the circumstances, but what is the absolutely right method of work; the laws of technical conditions. In painting it is to "know what you have to do, and do it."

The virtue of this method is, first of all, Freshness—the "quality" of luminous colour, whether in water or in oil, when it is laid down decisively and not meddled with. This is the only justification of much sloppy sketching and shapeless daubing; but it is a true aim, and if rightly and legitimately obtained, in combination with sound draughtsmanship, it affords the highest results in Art. In the next place, the habit of decision is itself a great moral power, and (when the decision is a right one) implies all the highest of human abilities—generalship, statesmanship, and whatever powers of mind—foresight, judgment, grasp of circumstances, rapidity of combinations—go to make a man greater than his fellows. This method does not necessitate a "summary treatment"; many of the most elaborated works have

been painted piece by piece with decisive rapidity, which does not preclude that lightness of touch and mystery of execution about which the student of Ruskin reads so much; on the contrary, it makes these possible (*M. P.*, vol. iv. chap. iv.; *Academy Notes*, 1858, pp. 24, 38). Turner, whose execution is so minute in some of his works that the finest mechanical handicrafts, such as the polishing of optician's lenses, imply less delicacy of handling (*T. P.*, App. 4), was also the most rapid of painters; and this rapidity might be paralleled among living men by those whose pictures show the greatest fulness of finish and exquisiteness of detail. "An artist's nerve and power of mind are lost chiefly in deciding what to do, and effacing what he has done; it is anxiety, not labour, that fatigues him; and vacillation, not difficulty, that hinders him. And if the student feels doubt respecting his own decision of mind, and questions the possibility of gaining the habit of it, let him be assured that in Art, as in life, it depends mainly on simplicity of purpose. Turner's decision came chiefly of his truthfulness; it was because he meant always to be true that he was able always to be bold" (*L. F.*, chap. viii. § 27).

157. *Style.*—The perfect method of painting is therefore a sort of mosaic, whether in oil or water-colour. Mr. Ruskin recognises no essential distinction between the two materials as to manner of work, though he does not allow that water-colour should be used as an imitation of oil-painting. The technical conditions of water-colour imply transparency and lightness—not fulness of colour

and power of relief. It is rightly called in old-fashioned language "water-colour *drawing*." But when body-colour is used, its technical conditions are changed; and in his earlier teaching he advises the use of body-colour from the first (*E. D.*, Letter iii. p. 201), partly because it approximates to Fresco, and shares its bloomy texture of unvarnished surface. But whether painting be in fresco or oil, pure water-colour or body-colour, its technical virtue is fully attained only in decision and freshness; and, apart from that, in painting, as in other work, it is better to do a little piece well than a great piece badly. *Decision*, it must be remembered, in our author's terminology, is not synonymous with "boldness" or haste; it involves careful preparatory study and observation, and no excuse for bungling draughtsmanship, or faulty values, or hasty execution, or coarsely-modulated gradations, can be drawn from his advice.

Of the relative position of oil and water-colour he speaks in *L. A.*, § 128, saying that oil-colour is the proper work for artists; but as its management is more difficult, and its materials practically inconvenient for use among books and papers, or for memoranda and note-book sketches, the amateur student is wiser in employing water-colour. And yet "the extended practice of water-colour painting, as a separate skill, is in every way harmful to the Arts; its pleasant slightness and plausible dexterity divert the genius of the painter from its proper aims, and withdraw the attention of the public from excellence of higher claim."

For Sculpture, and for Engraving, and for Painting there is a proper method, ascertainable by inquiry into the laws of their production. But, as in Ethics the ideal of morality is necessarily unattainable, so in Art the perfect way is not that which any given man can claim to have walked to the end. To determine it as a criterion of excellence is necessary; but to require it of every artist is absurd. Nor does Mr. Ruskin demand that every student and painter should approximate to his standard. Every man has his own gifts and aims, and he is right in finding out what he can do, and doing that, without attempting things to him impossible. "If we *know* our weakness, it becomes our strength; and the joy of every painter, by which he is made narrow, is also the gift by which he is made delightful, so long as he is modest in the thought of his distinction from others, and no less severe in the indulgence than careful in the cultivation of his proper instincts. . . . He will find, in his distinctness, his glory and his use; but destroys himself in demanding that all men should stand within his compass, or see through his colour."

## CHAPTER XX

### STUDY AND CRITICISM

158. *Style and Teaching.*—"No *true* disciple of mine," the author says (*St. Mark's Rest*, Preface to Second Supplement), "will ever be a 'Ruskinian'! He will follow not me, but the instincts of his own soul, and the guidance of its Creator." It has, however, not been well understood by those who have accepted Mr. Ruskin as a teacher that he does not profess to train artists. He has his own style of work, and he can teach that style, and he can teach many things about Art which others ignore or cannot grasp; but he never undertakes to furnish the professional student with a repertory of rules and methods, so that he may become a great artist, still less to show the amateur a short-cut to success. On the contrary, that is exactly what his whole teaching declares to be a delusion and a snare; his whole influence with students and artists has been given to make them better men, that is, with broader sympathies and keener intellectual habits; and sometimes the attempt has resulted in failure, because they were incapable of assimilating his "strong meat," or

mistook the purpose of his interference in their narrow sphere. His first great attempt at teaching, at the Working Men's College, was, as he said in his evidence before the National Gallery Commission, directed towards the general culture of the pupils rather than to their special training in Art; and although they did, in some cases, become very good painters or engravers or teachers, none of them have come before the public as popular artists.

It would be a serious mistake, then, to read his works in the hope of learning any secret of professional success. His own style he exemplifies, that refined chiaroscuro draughtsmanship (*L. A.*, § 187) which is especially useful as a method of studying natural features and the detail of architectural sculpture. The seventeen lessons in *The Elements of Drawing* illustrate a series of theorems, such as the abstract nature of outline, the superiority of refinement to force, the mystery of colour, and so on; and the exercises in *The Laws of Fésole* similarly direct the student's attention to points generally left unnoticed by ordinary teachers; but neither can be considered as complete handbooks of Art-Study. And the multiplicity of interests by which his life has been broken up have prevented his devoting himself to teaching, with that continuous energy which would have given him success, and enabled him to speak authoritatively on the best methods of professional training.

But Mr. Ruskin, though his own style is so definitely characterised, believes that there is an

ideal and right manner which might be codified into a standard scheme of teaching, just as there is a perfect style of painting, which is neither sensual nor formal, neither exclusively pious nor affectedly polite nor coarsely picturesque,—which contains the elements of all these without their one-sidedness—the Art of Titian (*T. P.*, § 57). And, avoiding eclecticism on the one hand, and on the other that weak affectation of extravagance which passes with the public for individuality, he would see all students trained in their first years of study under one system, selected by the serious care of the best authorities acting in concert, grounded in the fixed principles of all art, rooted in the habit of accurate observation and wide sympathy, and sped on their various and divergent careers, not as the nurslings of narrow schools and the adherents of rival masters, but, as in other professions, qualified and legitimate practitioners of an accepted and respected Art. Sometimes it seems as though it were wiser to develop the idiosyncrasy of a gifted student; but after all, it must be right to teach him the best methods to begin with, and while leaving him free in after years to choose his own style and examples, to put before him the highest at the outset (*T. P.*, § 60).

It often happens that genius breaks its way through all neglect and opposition, but it must more often happen that it is wasted and ruined by non-discovery and misdirection (*J.E.*, § 21, etc.) In order to discover talent, primary Schools of Art are needed throughout the country, teaching with

a view to bring out the *use* of Art, differing from "technical schools" in that the time of the pupils would be spent in studying natural fact by means of drawing natural objects, in connection with more or less scientific illustration of their studies; not primarily with the intention of learning a paying trade, but as a means of general culture (*L. A.*, § 5), much more powerful than any present system. From these schools those pupils who show aptitude for Art could be drafted into the higher professional schools, like those of the Royal Academy, just as the best scholars in literature are sent up to the Universities. And the Royal Academy, or whatever body represents the collective talent of the country in Painting and Sculpture, and the Institute of Architects, or other authoritative association for the advancement of the Decorative Arts, should formulate with due consideration an elementary method of teaching (*J. E.*, § 160), a curriculum which would turn out competent men, trained in a thorough knowledge of their business (*L. A.*, § 8). This, and not the desultory perusal of his writings, is Mr. Ruskin's ideal of Art-Education.

159. *The Aim of Art-Study.*—For that vast class of people who do not dedicate themselves to Art, but nevertheless desire, and require, some insight into its principles and some command over the practice of it, the Universities have a great work to do. So far back as 1857, when the first steps were being taken for the extension of the University, Mr. Ruskin proposed a system of Art-Examination (in a letter to the present Bishop of London, published in a work by Sir Thomas

Acland on the proposed Local Examinations, 1858). His objects were, to introduce Art as a branch of general education, to increase the knowledge of it among those who were likely to become patrons, and to discover latent genius. The Ruskin Drawing School at Oxford was, many years later, founded in the hope of realising these ideas, or rather, the first two of them.

All higher education includes in its conception the whole range of the Arts, those of language, sound, and form. To the teaching of natural form, that is, to all branches of Science, the practice of Drawing is not only an efficient help, but a necessary complement and corrective. To learn Music you must produce the sound with voice and instrument; to learn the complete truth about phenomena you must habitually reproduce them in Drawing; no mere reading will so fix the facts on the memory, and unveil them to the observation. And if Physical Sciences, such as Natural History, are to be taught at all, they will be best taught in conjunction with Drawing, if the lessons are combined by an intelligent teacher. The amount of Art-skill required is not great, and it was proved to Mr. Ruskin by his experience at the Working Men's College—and it has been proved since abundantly—that it is not at all impossible to realise this ideal (*J. E.*, § 156). No museums or lectures supply the place of this kind of practical teaching (*Old Road*, vol. i. p. 276), upon which not only greater knowledge of things in general is founded, but the beginning of a special interest in Art.

160. *Study for Amateurs.*—If it be necessary to educate the artist, it is quite as necessary to educate the public to appreciation of his work. The claims of the amateur and critic and patron to a sound and consistent knowledge of the works he is to admire and judge and possess, are hardly satisfied under present arrangements. The typical amateur is, nowadays, not a *lover of Art*, but a would-be artist, emulous of the reputation and jealous of the success of his professional friends; the weaker offspring of the self-same school, failing from indolence or misapplied energy, and still struggling to find a place in the borders of the professional body. But that is not the true conception of the amateur, who in old times was severed from the artist by a great gulf, now bridged by modern democracy, of social distinction; which, whatever its inconveniences, kept the two in right relation, as distinct and complementary workers in the same cause. To be versed in the practice of Art, while recognising that talent and life-long devotion are necessary to the profession of it; to appreciate and not to emulate, that is the business of the amateur who knows his privileges, and feels the greatness of the men he honours and encourages by his admiration. The modern competitive overproduction of painting, crowded into our galleries, is, if anything, a sign of deterioration. It means that the standard of Art is so low as to permit the casual amusement of the clever sketcher to rank with the labour of men who profess themselves the successors of Raphael and Reynolds; so low as to drag down

individual ideals to the level of that cheap trickery which can be taught in a few lessons and practised in odd half-hours.

But the true amateur is one who knows the value of good work by experience of the difficulty he has found in imitating it. He loves it too well to parade his attempt as successful, and he understands the possibilities of it too thoroughly to desire that the earnest workman should lower his aim to keep him company. When he paints, it is not to make pictures, to exhibit and sell them, but to get at the beauty of Nature, to study the greatness of the masters whom he imitates, and to fathom the laws of the Art he loves.

For this class of student Mr. Ruskin would have provision made at the Universities, such as is already made for the amateurs of literature and philosophy, of science and music; that is to say, a curriculum directed to the teaching of Art in all its branches—its history, theory, and practice in different methods and materials. For this the mere reading of books and hearing of lectures are inadequate; practical dealing with Art is the only efficient education. That it could be worked along with other studies he has tried to prove; that examinations could be held in justification of the time and labour spent upon it he has shown; and it may perhaps be hoped that in some future day the serious, consistent study of Art may be made practicable for non-professional students by the establishment of proper courses of teaching and examinations, on a level with the other "Schools" and "Triposes."

161. *Who are "the Masters"?*—To appreciate Art it is necessary to study the best that has been done, not by casual inspection, but as great works of literature are studied. This involves some amount of practical copying, and work after the methods of great masters (*L. A.*, § 71). It is impossible to enter into the spirit of a painter without following him in his execution; to realise his finesse and his force, his choice of truth, his subtle discriminations of character, and all that goes to make him great as compared with the inferior imitators of his style. But copying is generally used merely to learn these inferior tricks, to teach the would-be professional how to induce a superficial resemblance of a popular mannerism, or to manufacture for sale colourable imitations of works inaccessible to the general buyer. Accurate facsimiles, or artistic reproductions in place of engravings, are desirable when done by painters who devote their best energies to this kind of work; but for purposes of study by non-professionals Mr. Ruskin advises the careful copying of parts from great pictures as they stand, without attempted restoration (*L. F.*, Aph. 19), and intelligent abstracts of the whole subject.

What standards and examples are to be chosen for such study? In his early teaching Mr. Ruskin assumed that the highest development of Art must necessarily be the best model for future times, and that seems at first sight a plausible doctrine. But he rejected it after studying the Sociology of Art, and discovering that this highest

development takes place always on the dangerous edge before the downfall; that it contains the seeds of that crop of gaudy wild-flowers which, in the decadence, choke the good growth of perfect Art. And after learning *that*, the highest we can expect, without absurd presumption, is to rival the consummation of the schools of the past—not to rise from them to fancied higher regions—to work out in our own way something that may be not unworthy of mention beside Pheidias and Michelangelo, Titian and Velasquez, without ridiculously pretending to improve upon them. Now to do as they did we must learn as they learned; we must put ourselves under the great masters who taught these greatest artists the way to develop their powers. A great master is one who has great scholars, but Michelangelo and Raphael, Titian, Veronese, and Tintoret entirely failed to teach their Art, the full virtue of their work, to their successors. The reason is twofold: partly because the moral and social conditions produced degeneracy in the age succeeding theirs, the late Renaissance; and partly because their methods were not broadly elementary, as all teaching methods must be. A very great artist has his own tricks and turns of manner; his own choice and catch of expression; his own peculiarities, which to reproduce is the whole care of his pupil to the exclusion of intelligent self-development. So that a very great artist is probably a very bad master, and only a master against his better judgment, taking pupils rather for fame and pay and as assistants in his work than for the

real help he can give them towards becoming true painters themselves.

But the really great "master" is he whose methods and principles are intellectually definite and practically sound, capable of being applied to all subjects and requirements of varied aim, leaving scope for individuality in the pupil and development, restraining, for the time, passion, and cultivating needed patience; in a word, the great master is not an artist of the most brilliant and forceful genius, but one of singular intellectual power, conscious of his aims and critical of his means and methods. Such men were the teachers of Raphael and Michelangelo and Leonardo, of Titian, Veronese, and Tintoret; and if we wish to learn the secret of these great painters, as far as it can ever be learned, we must begin where they began, and work under Perugino and Ghirlandajo and Verrocchio and Giovanni Bellini, whose age and art are justly to be respected as "of the masters." Our author's *Laws of Fésole* are so called as representing the standards of practice current in the age of the masters in Tuscany round about Fiesole (then called Fésole from Latin Fæsulæ). The teaching that developed Raphael and his great contemporaries is decipherable, partly in Leonardo's treatise (*L. A.*, §§ 26, 129, etc.), partly in the works of the masters themselves, which thereby became valuable as standards and examples.

162. *Standards of Art-Study.*—Thus there has been a tendency in Mr. Ruskin's advice on study as he grew older to "put the clock back,"

and, instead of the later and greater names, to propose in every school an earlier stage, as exemplary to the modern student. Raphael, Rubens, and Michelangelo, Rembrandt and Dürer, Vandyck and Tintoret, are deposed one by one as good *teachers*, and in explaining the danger of following their practice, Mr. Ruskin sometimes gives the impression that he underrates their genius. But that is the reader's mistake; there must always be a distinction made between teaching and criticism (§ 162). On the disqualifications of Michelangelo as teacher, see *The Relation between Michelangelo and Tintoret* (shilling pamphlet), especially the prefatory note, which I mention because some of Mr. Ruskin's followers have taken up his parable against the greatest Florentine with more zeal than discretion, forgetting that Mr. Ruskin is not a partisan in these matters, but a philosopher, if any one is,—much misrepresented when the context and intention of his words are no longer allowed to tone them down.

Hence the two classes of standard artists given in *The Elements of Drawing* need rearrangement. They were: Class I., "always right"—Titian, Veronese, Tintoret, Giorgione, John Bellini, and Velasquez; Class II., "admitting question of right and wrong"—Van Eyck, Holbein, Perugino, Francia, Angelico, Leonardo, Correggio, Vandyck, Rembrandt, Reynolds, Gainsborough, Turner, and the Pre-Raphaelites. "You had better look at no other painters than these." Of engravings the student is advised to "look at" a specified list of Turner's (of which the most desirable are Barnard

Castle, Buckfastleigh, Dartmouth Cave, Flint Castle, Knaresborough, Lancaster Sands, Launceston, Chain Bridge over the Tees, and High Force of Tees—from the *England Series*; Drachenfels, Marly and Ballyburgh Ness—from the *Keepsake*; Solomon's Pools—from the *Bible*; Melrose, Dryburgh, Loch Coriskin—from *Scott*; Rouen, looking down the river, poplars on the right, and Caudebec—from *Rivers of France*); also Rembrandt's Spotted Shell and Dürer's Melencolia; Prout's Lithographs; John Lewis's Sketches in Spain; Cruikshank's Grimm; Rethel; Bewick; Blake's Job; Ludwig Richter's Lord's Prayer; and Rossetti's Illustrations to Tennyson.

Of these very few have run the gauntlet of forty years' criticism and still maintained our author's high opinion of them as trustworthy teachers. But I gather from the Oxford courses that the student may safely copy Greek sculpture and coins of the fifth and sixth centuries B.C., those of the fourth only with discrimination (*A. P.*, § 116), later classic sculpture not at all: most Romanesque twelfth-century detail; all thirteenth and fourteenth century Gothic carving in good French or Italian Architecture, English and German with discrimination; fifteenth-century and early Renaissance, where it is pure and not yet become cinquecento, or in the north corruptly Flamboyant. In Painting, Turner is still standard for landscape; Titian for completed style in figure painting; but Titian's master, Bellini, is the exponent of the style in which the student should begin,—that is, the outline and colour style

described in our last chapter. Veronese and Giorgione are still quoted as consummate masters —but the examples of the latter are too rare to be of much use to the English student. Tintoret is a great painter, but an unsafe guide (*T. P.*, App. 1); Velasquez keeps his place; but Rembrandt and Dürer fall before the analysis of the *Cestus of Aglaia* and *Ariadne Florentina*; while Leonardo, though treated with respect in the *Oxford Lectures*, is not admitted as authoritative. On the other hand, Luini, Carpaccio, and Botticelli are added to the list of masters. Of British masters, Mr. Ruskin's last word is that none are quite safe models for the student in every respect (*A. E.*, App.) Even William Hunt, once accepted (*T. P.*, § 69) as a sound teacher of water-colour practice, seems to come under this condemnation; I suppose because he used to "fudge things out," and the real master must know what he is doing, and tell the student why; which Hunt could never do.

In Engraving, Holbein for woodcuts and Botticelli for line are the standard types (see chap. xvii.); Richter's works are still praised for their fancy and feeling. The examples in the Oxford Drawing School—where a particular work can be detached from the less authoritative remainder of any period and style—include specimens of all kinds, such as the unassisted student could not choose nor procure by himself. "You shall draw Egyptian kings dressed in colours like the rainbow, and Doric gods, and Runic monsters, and Gothic monks—not that you may draw like Egyptians

or Norsemen, nor yield yourselves passively to be bound by the devotion, or inspired by the passion of the past, but that you may know truly what other men have felt during their poor span of life; and open your own hearts to what the heavens and the earth may have to tell you in yours" (*L. A.*, § 189).

163. *Study from Nature.*—"If you desire to draw that you may represent something that you care for, you will advance swiftly and steadily. If you desire to draw that you may make a beautiful drawing, you will never make one" (*L. F.*, chap. i. § 7). This is the principle of most of Mr. Ruskin's criticism on individual painters, and advice to students. The general method of drawing and painting, to be taken by students as standard, has been described; and in a work of this kind it is impossible to enter into details on the subject of materials. It should be enough to say that our author advises the use of the most ordinary and inexpensive colours, but the best brushes; of good paper, not coarse-grained nor otherwise involving cleverness of management and offering chances of accidental effect; and, generally speaking, he decides against all adventitious helps to eye and hand, whose training is the object of study; but, in first practice, lines must be measured and ruled to secure accuracy with compasses and protractor (see *L. F.*, chaps. iii. and iv.) His objection to sketching blocks (*A. E.*, App.) is, I believe, founded on the principle that all water-colour outdoor sketching is of the nature of a memorandum; and the note-book is the proper form in which such studies are

best made and preserved. The highly realised water-colour painting on a small scale, done out-of-doors, is not recommended to the student as a thing to be imitated at first; but water-colour is most convenient for outdoor notes (*L. A.*, § 128).

The "painful and humiliating exactness" which Reynolds required is required by Ruskin (*L. A.*, § 127); accuracy of line, to be got at first by measurement, and of colour by matching (*L. A.*, §§ 140, 142); no success is to be hoped for through ill-regulated effort (*L. A.*, § 163; *L. F.*, chap. iv. § 21); do great things before little ones—masses before details, colour before texture (*L. A.*, § 140). To secure breadth of treatment paint or draw always life-size (*L. F.*, Aph. 2), and attempt the effect of the object as seen at a distance of twelve feet (Aph. 3); not, however, slurring or sketching (*L. F.*, chap. iv. p. 14), seeing the surface and modelling, not peering into the texture, and grasping the relations of value and harmony of colours, not letting the eye rest exclusively on any one part, as it does when the object is seen close. "Without perfect delineation of form and perfect gradation of space, neither noble colour is possible, nor noble light" (*L. A.*, § 159).

For professional students the study of the nude is absolutely necessary, but anatomy is harmful (*A. F.*, App. 4). Instead, the attention of the student should be directed to certain general laws of structure as manifested in the external aspect of organic form; for example, the law of radiation (*L. F.*, chap. vi.) and the other laws of Beauty and

design (see §§ 56, 125). If these be looked for, rather than the underlying structure, a great saving of misspent energy is effected, and the danger of confusing Science and Art avoided (chap. vi.) The Greeks did not study anatomy; no more need the modern artist. But Mr. Ruskin strongly advocates study of the *figure*: even decorative workmen and designers of patterns must study the figure thoroughly as the preliminary to all work in Art (*T. P.*, § 83); no good ornament can be otherwise produced. Landscapists, *a fortiori*, must base their studies on a course of figure-drawing; not for the sake of learning how to insert figures, but to gain general power and knowledge.

Special outdoor study of landscape is taken (in *E. D.*) under three heads: (1) Work at leisure, in tint reinforced and defined with pen; (2) in haste, either study of effect with soft pencil and single gray wash, afterwards rubbing and scratching out lights, or outline, as memorandum of facts and written notes; (3) rapid block-out with pencil, dash of shadow with brush, and vigorous outline with pen, when dry. The tendency of the later teaching is to restrict all student's work to *careful* and *leisurely* work; not advising (2) and (3) until the student has advanced into something like a capable workman.

The choice of landscape subjects for study is wide: "Anything will do for a study" (*Academy Notes*, 1858). But, as we have seen, *unspoiled* Nature is assumed to be the field of the student's exercises; consequently, artificial rearrangements

of Nature are not good subjects. Nothing is more difficult to the landscape student or amateur than wise selection, but useful hints are given in the two lists following: (*A*) Things to avoid—(1) places that you love on account of their associations, such as your paternal mansion with its iron railings; (2) anything polished; (3) all very neat things; (4) tangles and complications, as of a cottage seen through a thin tree; (5) hedgerows. (*B*) Things to draw—banks, rivers' edges, roots of trees, mossy mill-dams, roadsides in a chalk country, the bases of tree-trunks of about nine inches or a foot in diameter, with a little ivy running up them (*E. D.*, Letter ii.) These are suggestions for the beginner in out-of-door work, after going through the course of outline and wash in the Drawing School; but the teacher cannot long hold his hand, and must soon trust him to his own devices and discretion.

164. *Teaching and Criticism.*—And here we come to the point at which the Teacher gives place to the Critic. Technical method in its elementary stages can be taught; but when once the student becomes an artist, he creates his own methods, which thereafter can only be criticised according to their results. The fundamental laws of Nature and Art can be taught; but the selection of his subject in illustration of these laws, the combination of ideas, is not to be taught, but only to be criticised. The critic's work begins where the teacher's ends; and that is sooner than is popularly supposed. For—partly because artists do not like to put forward their claim to special gift, and partly because the imitation of those

gifts seems often so like the real thing—we often hesitate to admit, what Mr. Ruskin states with strong emphasis, that the powers of design and execution are innate and instinctive, hereditary faculties, depending on conditions of morality, which we have already noticed, and as valuable as they are rare. The fineness of perception, the steadiness of nerve, the muscular precision of a great artist, are, for mere physical quality, beyond the reach of any drill or method of teaching; they are the result of racial conditions, sociological and moral, which have taken ages of preparation, and involve all manner of unexpected issues (*L. A.*, § 71). Hence, great execution is a sign of unparalleled power, and must not be mistaken for the acquired accomplishment of the first comer. Great design is another faculty of like sort, which may indeed be hampered and hindered by bad teaching, but can never be created by the best.

But these gifts, not to be gained by anything we can do, may be lost by our failure to recognise, or folly in misapplying them; and it is necessary to the wellbeing of Art that both good teachers and good critics should coexist along with good artists. In a way, and in a degree, every one is an Art-critic, for we all have to do with Art, either as helping or delaying it; we all either patronise it or pooh-pooh it. The great class of amateurs, especially, merges into that of the critics, who need not print their criticisms to give them effect. To tolerate evil, or to ignore good, is indirect criticism, and that of a kind often more

effectual than the choicest vituperation or the most fulsome flattery of the press (*J. E., passim*).

165. *The Function of the Critic*—"*Qualified*; though not *faint* praise is the real function of just criticism; for the multitude can always see the faults of good work, but never, unaided, its virtues; on the contrary, it is equally quick-sighted to the vulgar merits of bad work, but no tuition will enable it to condemn the vices with which it has a natural sympathy; and, in general, the blame of them is wasted on its deaf ears" (*A. E.*, App.) "You can, in truth, understand a man's word only by understanding his temper" (*L. A.*, § 68), and in so far as Art is a language this is true of Art: sympathy and penetrative imagination are necessary for criticism. This conception of it was hardly known before Mr. Ruskin set the example and showed the way. It was considered enough to measure any new work by the rules of current academicism, and to announce the result; too short, or too long, was equally a misfit. But scientific criticism is quite another thing; to see in any work, not only a net result, but a process, a step in evolution, a record of moral and social progress, encouraging or disheartening; to judge it from full knowledge of the circumstances of its production, and to assign it a place in history; all this has been the aim of good criticism since Ruskin wrote his *Modern Painters*, and illustrated his method by applying it to Turner and Tintoret.

From this it follows, "First, that sound criticism of Art is impossible to young men. . . . A great artist represents many and abstruse facts; it is

necessary, in order to judge of his work, that all those facts should be experimentally (not by hearsay) known to the observer, whose recognition of them constitutes his approving judgment. A young man *cannot* know them. Criticism of Art by young men must, therefore, consist either in the more or less apt retailing and application of received opinions, or in a more or less immediate and dexterous use of the knowledge they already possess, so as to be able to assert of given works of Art that they are true up to a certain point; the probability being then that they are true farther than the young man sees. The first kind of criticism is, in general, useless, if not harmful; the second is that which youths will employ who are capable of becoming critics in after years.

"Secondly, all criticism of Art, at whatever period of life, must be partial, warped more or less by the feelings of the person endeavouring to judge. Certain merits of Art (as energy, for instance) are pleasant only to certain temperaments; and certain tendencies of Art (as, for instance, to religious sentiment) can only be sympathised with by one order of minds. . . .

"Thirdly, the history of Art is in no wise directly connected with the studies which promote or detect Art-capacity or Art-judgment. It is quite possible to acquire the most extensive and useful knowledge of the forms of Art existing in different ages, and among different nations, without thereby acquiring any power whatsoever of determining respecting any of them (much less respecting a modern work of Art), whether it is

good or bad" (*The Arts as a Branch of Education*, 1857).

Nor can the laws of criticism be learnt theoretically even from the most complete philosophy of Art or exposition of its virtues, unless the intending critic be a practical amateur of Art. "For those who will not learn to carve or paint, and think themselves greater men because they cannot,"—this is addressed, in the first place, to architects,—"it is wholly wasted time to read any words of mine; in the truest and sternest sense they *can* read no words of mine; for the most familiar I can use—'form,' 'proportion,' 'beauty,' 'curvature,' 'colour'—are used in a sense which by no effort I can communicate to such readers" (*T. P.*, Preface).

166. *The Criteria of Art.*—But some few principles can be gathered as the first rough tests to apply to any given work. Genius is so difficult a thing to deal with, that it is generally misunderstood until it is too late to encourage it (*J. E.*, § 26), though "a really good picture is ultimately always approved and bought, unless it is wilfully rendered offensive to the public by faults which the artist has been either too proud to abandon or too weak to correct" (*L. A.*, § 7). "But there is one fault which you may be quite sure is unnecessary, and therefore a real and blamable fault, that is, haste, involving negligence. Whenever you see that a young man's work is either bold or slovenly, then you may attack it firmly, sure of being right. If his work is bold, it is insolent; repress his insolence; if it is slovenly, it is

indolent; spur his indolence. So long as he works in that dashing or impetuous way, the best hope for him is in your contempt, and it is only by the fact of his seeming not to seek your approbation that you may conjecture he deserves it. But if he does deserve it, be sure that you give it him, else you not only run a chance of driving him from the right road by want of encouragement, but you deprive yourselves of the happiest privilege you will ever have of rewarding his labour" (*J. E.*, §§ 25, 26).

In *Modern Painters* (vol. iii. chap. iii.) there are four canons of criticism, so to speak, which, if difficult to apply, are no more difficult than any criteria should be in so difficult an analysis. Taking them in ascending order of importance, a great man will generally choose a *Noble Subject*, rather than a brutal or vicious one. And yet the subject alone does not make greatness, for it must be treated nobly, involving high technical power in one or other direction, not necessarily in all; because one man cannot master every excellence, and some great aims are incompatible with others. Next, he will seek an excess of *Beauty* in addition to Truth, not an excess of Beauty inconsistent with Truth. Third, he will be *Sincere*, and show it in distinctness of aim, completeness of representation, and delicacy of execution. *Distinctness* does not mean crude detail or hard drawing, but definite grasp of his subject, which, if it be essentially misty or dim, will produce a misty or dim picture, the aim still being distinct. *Completeness* often involves largeness of scale, for it is

only on the scale of life that life can be fully represented so as to be effectively seen; and yet some of the greatest works, such as Turner's water-colours, are on a miniature scale, finished with microscopical fulness, and give as much Truth and Beauty as the acreage of other men's canvases. And *delicacy* is the token of moral and mental and physical sensibility, without which Great Art is impossible ("all Great Art is delicate," is a favourite maxim of the later works also); but it does not mean minuteness, for the large and swift dashes of Reynolds or Tintoret are delicate because of their accurate adjustment to the general effect of the picture. Last, and most important, is *Imagination*, the poetic, creative faculty, giving "noble grounds for noble emotion."

In the closing lecture of the Oxford course on Sculpture (1871) a still more penetrative remark is added to these. "Calmness is the attribute of the entirely highest class of Art; the introduction of strong or violently emotional incident is at once a confession of inferiority." Thus the first attributes of the best Art are "faultless Workmanship and perfect Serenity; a continuous, not momentary, action—or entire inaction. You are to be interested in the living creatures, not in what is happening to them.

"Then the third attribute of the best Art is that it compels you to think of the spirit of the creature, and therefore of its face more than of its body. And the fourth is that in the face you shall be led to see only beauty or joy, never vileness, vice, or pain. Those are the four essentials

of the greatest Art. I repeat them, they are easily learned—

"(1) Faultless and permanent workmanship.

"(2) Serenity in state and action.

"(3) The Face principal, not the body.

"(4) And the Face free from either vice or pain."

167. *The Future of Art.*—These rules were illustrated in the work of Bellini, who, we saw, was to be regarded as the chief of the age of "masters"; since when—how far has Art, judged by this theory which we have now studied, made progress and advancement toward perfection? That the Art of this century has advanced, on the whole, is the belief of Mr. Ruskin, as I gather it from the opening of his latest lectures on the subject (*A. E.*, pp. 4, 5), but not that the work of the present day surpasses the greatest achievements of the past. New elements have been added, the whole school of Naturalistic Landscape, for example; and yet merely to shift its ground is not to progress, or our nomadic ancestors of neolithic time would have been the most progressive people in history. Art is, like Philosophy, the exponent of its age, and no final consummation of either need be hoped or feared for by any one, as long as the world goes on, and human nature remains constant to those laws by which it has abided since the dawn of recorded time; so long must Art, in some form, remain with us.

But it may follow the example of those nomad tribes, and settle down to serious cultivation of

its soil, accumulating its wealth, and developing resources yet unexplored. The possibilities of the illustration of Nature, indicated by Mr. Ruskin, are far from exhausted; every new discovery in the realm of Physical Science may be paralleled by fresh interests, new ideas of Beauty, opened up to Art. Landscape was practically unknown before Nature was studied, and with all new movements toward the unknown and untried, Art keeps pace.

And there is another field for its extension indicated in the moral nature of Art, so untiringly illustrated by Mr. Ruskin. The use of Art is not to make pictures only, or carve stones, but to make men; to give wider scope to human sympathy and keener insight and deeper thought. The work of Art is not complete until it reacts upon all the human race; housing them first, and feeding and clothing them; teaching them, too, and raising their eyes from the sordid interests and sensual indulgences in which so large a proportion of them is engrossed. What it can do for one and another, it must do for all, before its work is finished. So that the true Art-Teaching is of a piece with all social progress and political amelioration, and no earnest mind can study Art without being led through it into wider fields and all-embracing realms of helpfulness to humanity. "The greater part of the technic energy of men, as yet," says Mr. Ruskin (*A. P.*, § 30), "has indicated a kind of childhood; the race becomes, if not more wise, at least more manly, with every gained century. I can fancy

that all this sculpturing and painting of ours may be looked back upon, in some distant time, as a kind of doll-making, and that the words of Sir Isaac Newton may be smiled at no more; only it will not be for stars that we desert our stone dolls, but for men. When the day comes, as come it must, in which we no more deface and defile God's image in living clay, I am not sure that we shall any of us care so much for images of Him in burnt clay."

Meanwhile, to conclude his Art-Teaching with the closing words of it—alas for some of us that they should be so!—written at Chamouni on Sunday, 16th September 1888, to end the Epilogue to the last edition of his first work—his *Nunc Dimittis*:—

"All that is involved in these passionate utterances of my youth was first expanded and then concentrated into the aphorism given twenty years afterwards in my inaugural Oxford Lectures, 'All Great Art is Praise,' and on that aphorism the yet bolder saying founded, 'So far from Art's being immoral, in the ultimate power of it, nothing but Art is moral; Life without Industry is sin, and Industry without Art brutality' (I forget the words, but that is their purport); and now, in writing beneath the cloudless peace of the snows of Chamouni, what must be the really final words of the book which their beauty inspired and their strength guided, I am able, with yet happier and calmer heart than ever heretofore, to enforce its simplest assurance of Faith, that the knowledge of what is beautiful leads on, and is the first step

to the knowledge of the things which are lovely and of good report; and that the laws, the life, and the joy of Beauty, in the material world of God, are as eternal and sacred parts of His creation as, in the world of spirits, virtue; and in the world of angels, praise."

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